

SMITH'S

APRIL 1913

MAGAZINE

15 CENTS



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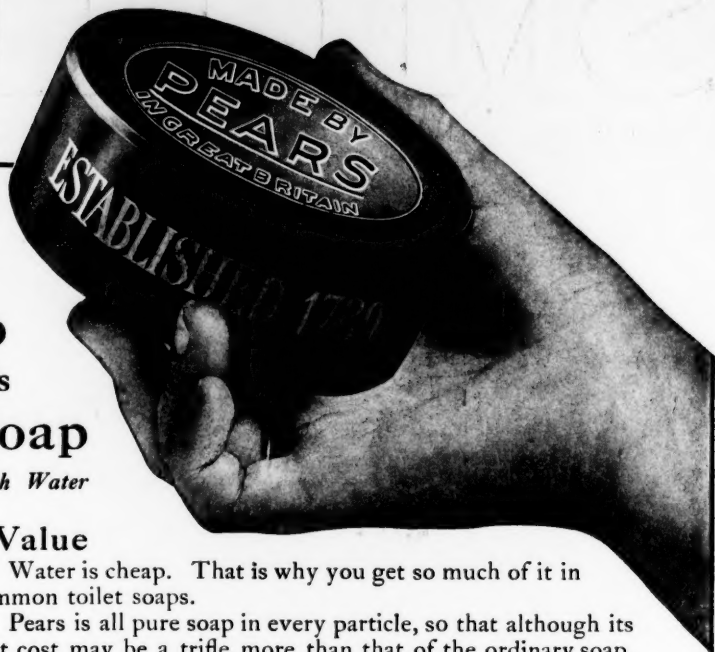
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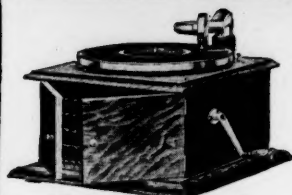
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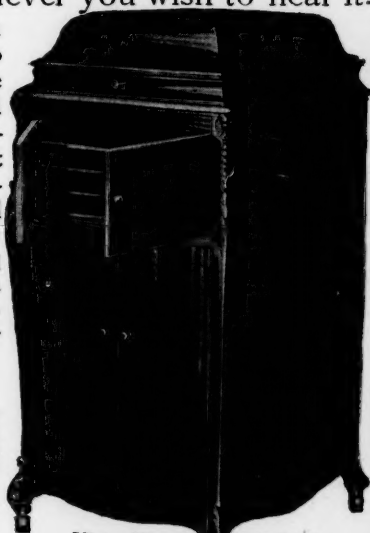
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Vol. XVII

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

No. 1

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 17

APRIL, 1913

NUMBER 1

The Sisters

By Grace Margaret Callaher

Author of "Sinners All," "Let Nothing You Dismay," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. W. HARTING

THREE old men and an old woman sat under the trees in a village garden, talking over, with solemn excitement, the death and funeral of Squire Brooks.

"A great man, he was, an' a God-fearin' one." The silence of a few moments was broken by a veritable patriarch, crowned with thick, white hair.

"Was so, was so," nodded a mere twig of a man, thin and brown; "an' one o' the most varied in his activities."

"First s'lectman forty year, first church trustee thirty-five," a very round, rosy-cheeked little man thrust in his note. "Guardeen o' the poor, school visitor, president o' the County Association, an'—"

"Held gover'ment position twenty year, right through Whig an' Democratic admin'strations," the thin man broke in. "I guess, if the truth was known, there's few that's been as honored by our gover'ment."

"Done well by his grandson," announced the patriarch. "Nathaniel Brooks been raised like a son right from the cradle."

"Done well by that passel o' step-grandchildren, too," assented the rosy-cheeked man. "No kind o' obligation on him, neither, seein' they're only wife kin."

"They be growed up real cap'ble."

This the old woman in a marveling voice.

"There's wild blood in 'em, though. I'd be afeard it would out some day," mused the little old man. "Their grand-sire, ol' Cap'in Tripp—Mis' Squire Brooks' first husband—he ra'ed up high sometimes, I can tell ye."

"I never heard as he done anythin' disgraceful." The old woman groped in a long-gone past when they had all been young together.

"No, no," testily, "but crowded full o' his whimsies, an' he would follow 'em out wheresoever they'd lead him. Them Tripp girls has got an inheritance to contend with."

"The risin' generation ain't a-goin' to produce no such fashion o' a man as ol' squire; a poor lot o' young fellows they be." Thus the patriarch, who had no grandsons.

"Oh, there's some tol'ble good boys growin' up round here," ventured the thin man, who had. "There's Than Brooks, you mentioned yourself; he's as honorable an' likely a young man as you'd like to see."

"You present at the readin' o' the will, Ezzy?" The old woman came out flatly with the question the others were eager, but ashamed, to ask.

"I witnessed it, an' I heard it read out arter the funeral yesterday." The

patriarch unbent from his heights, as each drew nearer. "There was a number o' legacies in the way o' friendship to different persons, an' the Lord's treasury weren't forgot, neither; he's bequeathed a thousand dollars to the church."

"My, my!" breathed the old woman, while the old men clacked with their tongues.

"He bequeathed the mansion an' the farm to the Widder Tripp for her use an' behoof so long as she shall live." The phraseology of the law rolled grandly on his lips. "When she's through with it, Than gets it."

"I call that pretty gen'rous!" cried the rosy-faced man.

"The bulk o' the property, the mill, and the Great Meaders, an' the money in bank, an' the bonds, an' all like that, goes outright to Nathaniel Brooks, him an' his heirs forever."

"You deem Than's a rich man now?" queried the old woman.

"Pretty snug fortune, pretty snug," acquiesced the patriarch, as one wonted to such high finance that no wealth could shake his poise. "An' Than's one who'll use it prudent, too."

"Who's to have the post office, think?" The old woman spoke as if this, also, were a legacy to be willed at pleasure.

"Than, o' course," reproved the patriarch. "'Tain't in reason to believe any man's goin' to set up his Ebenezer 'gain' a Brooks for that position, an' the pres'dent wouldn't pay no manner o' heed to him if he done so."

"That's the truth," they all agreed.

"I call'te Patience Tripp'll tend to the wants o' the public like she done in squire's administration," the old woman remarked.

"Her an' him goin' to make a jine o' it?" grinned the round-faced old man.

"Lor, no! Menfolks be blind! They're milk an' vinegar to each other. Felicity's the one Than'll prize—if any—but them girls is the same's sisters to him."

"Well, it's likely 'nough Than'll accept o' her for his clerk." The patriarch reached for his cane. "I see my

son a-comin' from the store, ready to drive up home. 'Bliged to ye, Marthy, for your hospital'ity."

The other old men went their ways, likewise.

That very same hour, at "the mansion" itself, the squire's will and his government relations were under advisement. The mansion was an ancient dwelling, kind in all its aspects, shining white on the crown of the hill whose green bastions safeguarded the village of Gilead, basking in the sunlit fields, and dabbling its feet in the clear river running by to the sea. The squire's house looked down upon all the occasions of the village with benignant scrutiny, yet shielded itself from a counter-interest behind low-swinging elms and a deep hedge of box, planted in times beyond the memory of the most venerable. The house stood knee-deep in flowers—roses, poppies, larkspur, London pride, sweet William—all the riot of color and sweetness of the quick of the year; beyond it, acre on acre, rolled the marvelous green of early wheat. A broad, smooth road wound up from the village past the courthouse and the church, and by it drew near farm wagons or chaises; but a crooked cat path through the meadows and down over the rocks served the village folk to get their mail.

This cool June day, when the village, the meadows, and the river were tranced in the spell of the late afternoon sunshine, and the long shadows sprayed themselves in motionless beauty across the grass, the front door of the house was open, and the wide hall, with its high-shouldered, jolly-faced clock and great, blue, India jars, was full of the salt tang of the sea, borne inland by the tide.

Illusive, faint, yet permeating as the sea air, the sound of music stole through all the rooms. Halting fingers were playing the piano which the squire's grandfather had brought from Europe to the mansion, the first piano ever seen in Gilead; unskillful fingers truly, in technical forms, yet drawing from the frail and ancient keys the very soul of melody.



"You present at the readin' o' the will, Ezry?"

The life of the house was quick just now in the great kitchen, fresh and sweet from many sweepings and scourings. By a window where red roses peeped in shyly, the Widow Tripp was capping berries into a fine china bowl; at the table her daughter molded biscuits; a lanky boy whittled into the wood box; a man sat by the table, and another man was just entering the outer door. This last took off his big straw hat in an awkward bow.

"Afternoon, Mis' Tripp," he said bashfully. "I didn't know if it was so as I could get the mail to-day, or——"

"Come in!" called a voice from another room. "I'm postmaster, *pro tem*."

The young fellow sidled into the post office, a swarthy blush on his tanned cheeks. The post office was singularly meager of official grandeur, for it was only a windowed closet, with a table, a chair, and standing room for one member of "the public." On the table were a lean leather pouch, an ink bottle, a tray of pens, and a steel stamping ham-

mer. Unimportant as its setting might be, the citizens of Gilead were proud to the heart of their government relations. They knew that they were but a district of Pettipaug township, not justly entitled to an office of their own, and that only Squire Brooks' favor with the president had obtained one for them.

"Hello, Jerry, want your mail?" The postmaster stretched a slim brown hand to open the table drawer, which contained a hundred stamps, half a dozen post cards, and a meager pile of letters.

"Avery, Ayers, Chandler, Holbrook," she ran over them nimbly; "Lay, Abimelech; Lay, Jared E.—here you are." A long envelope was his reward.

Still he lingered, shifting uneasily, for the postmaster's eyes were full of dark mischief, her hair grew in alluring little quirks around her face.

"Mother sends you the word she's powerful sorry you've been called to mourn."

The girl's smile faded. "Thank your mother for me, Jerry."

"You folks'll miss the ol' squire," emboldened to speak for himself; "he was right in things to the last. He was a man o' tremendous intellect," he hesitated, "an' generous spirited, too."

Jerry Lay, playmate of old time, had often heard Patience Tripp's fierce onsets upon the grim old stepgrandfather, but to the dead should be loyal silence only.

"He was good, Jerry," she answered steadily. "Come, Jud, time to take the bag."

With a shyly tender good-by, the man backed out to let the lanky boy get the mail bag, which he carried off across his saddle pommel, riding down the lane on a colt.

"Patience, you through?" came a melancholy voice from the kitchen. "Call Hallie. Nathaniel's here—he wants we should talk business."

The postmaster locked her drawer, the biscuit maker put her dough in the oven, the musician left her playing; all, as at a king's command, seated themselves in the kitchen. The three girls bore the seal of their sisterhood in their slim height, their graceful motions, and that mysterious personality flowing through all their acts, nowadays called temperament. Other resemblance was none. Hallie, the oldest, was a beautiful creature, with great, tender, liquid, brown eyes under shadowy hair, and a color like a rose that paled or deepened with every breath. Felicity, the youngest, had reached back into the years to gather from some forgotten Quaker ancestress her staid charm; her smooth, yellow braids, candid eyes, and peaceful smile needed only a close gray bonnet to make of her a disciple of "the Inner Light." Patience—name ironically ill-bestowed—was "the off one," according to the squire's comment, for her small brown face could twinkle with droll malice like a wood pixy's, and her gray eyes, full of strange depths, could caress, and mock, and allure till the youth who gazed therein was bewitched clean out of his senses.

It was Patience who spoke first, for Hallie was in a happy daze of sweet sound, and Felicity would have sat

speechless till midnight before adventuring upon any theme in front of Nathaniel Brooks.

"If it's grandsire's will you want to talk over, Than, you ought to wait for Bart." Hobart was the eldest of the Tripp family.

"Bart an' I understand each other." Nathaniel was a splendid figure of youth, tall and strong, with a fine head, and the red of good outdoor living in his well-featured face, but his expression was amusingly like that of a spoiled princeling, both condescending and sulky.

"There's a matter grandsire talked over with me 'long last winter. He wanted to put it in his will in the form o' a codicil, but he never got round to it, death took him so sudden. There ain't a scrap o' writin' to show for it, but 'tis as bindin' on me as though it was registered in the courthouse." He stopped, in what Patience called his "aggravatin'ly moderate way."

"Grandsire was a good man," trembled out "Car'line," the mother, sure that this was a safe expression of opinion upon any issue.

"Grandsire felt you girls was deservin' o' some heritage, seein' you'd always been respectful, obedient, an' worked consid'ble hard in the house. He counted on givin' each o' you three hundred dollars. I brought it to you now."

Each sister took the news after her own fashion. "Oh!" cried Hallie, "oh!" claspin' her hands, coloring, and trembling; the money came so exquisitely upon a wish! Felicity said nothing, moved not at all, but a sweet surprise quickened all her fair face. Patience spoke out with a snap:

"There! I'll think better o' grandsire long as I live!"

"I made out the checks separate," Than told them smilingly. "All you need do is to write your name on the back, an' put the money into Pettipaugh Bank. I'd be prudent in the spendin' o' it."

"An' I'll think better o' you, Than Brooks," swept on Patience, with whom thought and speech were contemporaneous; "'twas honor'ble an' generous to

give us that money when there weren't a line o' writin' to hold you."

"I aim to act honor'ble always, Patience," stiffly.

Car'line and the others began to murmur their happy thanks. Nathaniel, still smiling over his good deed, reached for his hat.

"I guess the meetin' stands adjourned. I'm goin' to Pettipaug tomorrow. Can I do any tradin' for you?"

Patience drew herself together, tall and straight, her narrow feet braced on the floor, as one about to speed a shrewd thrust.

"Who's goin' to be postmaster?"—the thrust.

"Well, Patty, I kind o' hope I am." His smile upon her was indulgent. "It's presidential appointment, you know, but the boys are goin' round with a petition, an' I make no manner o' doubt president'll give it to me, seein' how grandsire's the only postmaster this village has ever had."

"You deem you'll get you a clerk?" Patience's voice was creamy smooth, her eyes like gray velvet.

The young man stared a little. "You needn't to worry, Pat," he assured her. "I'll let you keep on same as you did for grandsire; you made him a trust-worthy assistant for—let's see—"

"Eight year, every day in the week, 'cept Sabbath; every week in the year, an' there's fifty-two to each year. An' I ain't goin' to be your clerk nor anybody's clerk again, ever! You ask why?" Her words rushed over each other in a flying stream. "I'm goin' to be postmaster myself."

"You can't. It belongs to a voter." He seized the first missile that came to hand.

"The cat's tail!" with force if not relevancy. "Who's been postmaster there in that office for eight year?" She stretched a dramatic hand toward the cubby-hole as it might be to point out a committee room of Congress. "Squire Brooks? Oh, land o' Goshen! No! I've been, Patience Abigail Tripp! I've handled every letter that came or went, an' I've written every communication

to gov'ment, an' I've footed every account an' receipted every bill. Grandsire just signed his name where I told him—an' drew the salary."

"I make no manner o' doubt you've borne respons'ibilities," her opponent conceded.

"I've borne the whole post office!" triumphantly, "an' I've never had so much as one holiday, not even county-fair week; an' I've never had one cent o' salary, either."

"I'll pay you well."

"No, you won't! I won't take it. You listen to me, Than Brooks!" She shook a small fist in his face. "This post office is dreadful wearin'—you got to be right here, tied to the house within sound o' the horn, every last day o' the week from nine in the mornin' to five in the afternoon—can't so much as run out in the orchard for an apple, or down to the spring for a cool drink, for fear somebody'll be rammiting round for his mail or to buy a postage stamp. How you think your mill over on Lieutenant River is a-goin' to like that, or your bank to Pettipaug?"

"My clerk will stay here while I—"

"Who's goin' to be your clerk?" fiercely.

"Patience Tripp," with dogged coolness.

"My country! If I was a man I don't know as I could keep my hands off you!" Nathaniel gave back a step, urged by memories of childish quarrels in which sex had not restrained his fiery relative. "I've stayed nailed here to this house from the time I was fourteen right up to this minute, never goin' to any pleasures, berry parties, or nuttin's, or quiltin's, or like that. I've seen 'em drive off, mother, an' grandsire, an' all, an' I've never so much as said I'd be pleased to go. I did it for grandsire."

Nathaniel looked down at his feet. Had she really cared for the harsh old man like that?

"Grandsire took mother in when father died, an' she hadn't a possession on earth but just five hungry children. Mother earned her way, waitin' on

poor, bedrid grandma by inches for years an' years, an' I guess folks would say Hallie an' Felicity earned theirs, bakin' an' churnin', an' keepin' this great house neat as wax. I worked in the post office. I did it out o' gratitude to him, but I don't owe any debts to you, Than Brooks, an' I'll be switched if I'll so much as gum a stamp for you!" Patience's brown face was pale, her gray eyes burned darkly.

"I don't suppose you've ever thought out just how hard livin' went under grandsire. There's mother." She motioned to the woman by the window, a figure of submission that needed no words. "There's Bart—born with skill for some kind o' mechanism in every finger he's got—wasn't let go to school, must be a farmer. There's Hallie—longin' after music with every breath o' her bein', an' a wonderful piano right in the keepin' room—mustn't play a note—he hid the key—she must tend the chickens an' the ducks an' flax round in the garden. But Hallie found the key." And Patience laughed rather wildly.

"Daughter, daughter," murmured the feeble Car'line.

"Take a look at the case o' Felicity—did you ever know any soul ever lived that was so crazy possessed over flowers an' all the bloomin' things? An' she's got magic to make 'em grow, too—you just let her stick into the ground any old dry root o' rose or geranium, an' by mornin' it'll color all out in posies. Course, grandsire wasn't willin' she should take her comfort in bein' a good gardener—she had to learn dress-makin' over to Pettipaug—hates the very name o' thimble, only she's too humble meek to say so. Always thwartin' us for 'the development o' character.'" Her voice quivered scornfully over the quotation.

"Stop!" The cold, slow voice was a dash of water in her face, making her gasp. Than was angry, in a quiet, ugly way. "There's no manner o' use rakin' up by-gones, nor in defamin' the dead. You never dared to say this to grandsire's face."

"Of course I didn't," in a candor that

mollified even his resentment. "That's why I got to say it now."

"You an' me musn't be quarrelin', Patience. You feel obligated to help out in the fam'ly. How you deem you can do it?"

"Be postmaster," in a flash of malice; then, relenting, for, after all, she had grown up with Than: "If I'm not 'pointed to that, Mis' Ann Jane Dawes wants me to help her sew; she's got more work than she can swing to."

"I'll pay you a good salary as clerk."

"Two hundred dollars a year?" twinkling at him.

"Certain I won't! That's the whole sal'ry for the postmaster himself."

Patience shook her head slowly, wisely. Her fury was calmed now by her spurt, but her stout will was set. "You'll find it consid'ble serious matter learnin' the duties an' teachin' a clerk, too," she admonished him.

"How you set out to get this appointment, if I may be bold enough to inquire?" with slow sarcasm.

Patience smiled brightly upon his ignorance. "Lyman Gillette—he's the mail clerk on the Valley Road—he's a-goin' round day after to-morrow—that's his day off—to get every householder to sign a paper sayin' they'd like me for the position; an' the postmaster to Pettipaug is a-goin' to write how I've never been late a moment gettin' the bag to an' from him; an' Lyman's got a cousin that goes to Washington, an' he's a-goin' to talk to the president himself 'bout me."

Nathaniel fell back upon his first defense. "President won't appoint a woman."

"What's Mis' Julianna Brainard, over to Rainbow, that's postmaster there?" exultantly.

"The public would rather be served by a man," still doggedly at his point.

Suddenly Hallie spoke out, her voice thrillingly soft and deep: "You ask Jerry Lay, an' some o' the other men, if that's so."

They all laughed, even Than in a sulky grin; for, droll face and three-cornered temper to reckon in, Patience was yet the belle of Gilead.

Young Brooks rose heavily. Even with her slim tallness, he was a head above his enemy. He looked hard and keenly down into her gray eyes; and they, softer, but no less steady, looked up into his blue ones. He was all Brooks, said the village, shrewd, like his grandsire, to read the signs of the times, and to recognize "needs must."

"I thought you set by me, Patience," in rather a low voice. "We were raised like brother an' sister."

The girl's answer was as low as his: "You got a mill, an' a farm, an' a bank, an' a whole parcel o' rich things, Than. I got just my one ewe lamb—the post office."

Nathaniel walked to the door clumpingly. "You send that mail fellow to me first with his paper. I don't want folks should think there's any feelin' between us."

The battle was won.

Patience stood quite still till his heavy tread died on the path; then she ran swift and light out through the garden, to the ancient orchard, set with apple trees of gnarled fidelity. There she flung herself on the grass, trembling all over her slim body. She had fought a good fight for her rights; she had won. Where was exaltation and the glow of victory? Than was a good fellow, if a hard one, and a kind of brother, after all. What sort of a world was it when justice and one's due reward brought only a sense of shame and contrition?

"Oh, well!"—she rubbed away the tears crowding into her eyes—"Felicity'll comfort him; she thinks he was present at Creation, an' helped start the world a-goin'."

In the kitchen a soft babble of talk followed the exit of the two warriors; and as the oldest sister had eloquence, and the other side numbers, the end might have been long if a young man had not looked in to say unimportantly: "Ef you're goin' home to-night, Hallie, you better start now; tide won't serve much longer."

"I'm comin', Bart. Good-by, mother. Felicity, I'll be over next week, if I have to walk it."

At the foot of the hill, the brother and sister set off in a small catboat up the river, the tide and a wandering little wind carrying them along prettily.

"Want I should take you up the crik?" Bart asked, after about half an hour's voyage.

"You needn't to; just land me here at Hull's Dock. I'll clip it home 'cross the pastures." She fluttered him a light good-by, and was off, springy as a deer.

She sped up the hidden path that ran, like some little wood creature, in and out under the bayberry and sweet fern, whose leaves, brushed by her skirts, gave forth into the still air healing scents. The sun was slipping below the rim of the world; a lovely violet light flowed over all the hills; the air was chilly sweet; small, chirping noises of nesting birds pattered at her ears; away off a songbird sang in an exquisite thrill of melody. Hallie sang with him, a wordless, glorious song, golden with fulfilled desire; her feet flew up the hill as if shod with wings. Over the crest of green she flitted—the empurpled west felt only as a note in her symphony of rapture—down into the tender twilight of the valley, and so home to her own farmstead.

The house was ancient and quaint and sweet, set in a garden of bright flowers, and covered by roses and honeysuckle; through the orchard stepping-stones went primly, like neat old ladies, down to a tunnel of the great Connecticut. Hallie darted into her kitchen, her hat leaping by a string from her hand, her hair fluttering in little, soft rings around her face, her eyes pools of light. In the kitchen a man sat reading the paper, and it needed no glance at the clock to tell her that milking was over, and he long time hungry for supper.

"Dick!" she cried, in her vibrating voice, and "Hallie!" he answered her in a pleased drawl.

He shook her in his grasp, a hand on either slender shoulder.

"Just one more hour, missy," he told her in mock ferocity, "an' I'd have put the sheriff onto your trail." He kissed the dimple in the curve of her lips with the pleasant content of a man who real-

izes that he has a lovely and devoted woman for his own possession; but she kissed him back with a very passion of love.

"Supper'll be ready in ten minutes." She smiled at him comfortingly as she gave a poke to the fire, whisked out the biscuit board, and rattled the flour bucket onto the table.

Her husband followed her about the room, picking up her hat, buttoning a pink tier over her dress, and otherwise hindering her, commenting in a slow drawl of jokes upon her tardiness and consequent haste.

"Any man to watch these provisions knocked together would say, 'Scuse me, I'll take supper to the tavern,'" he scoffed, as he passed his plate for more stew; "but I can manage to make a meal out o' 'em."

Hallie laughed delightfully, her eyes big and starbright with the news she was holding back till her man should be fed. To have yearned for a gift all the days of your years, and then to have it miraculously dropped into your lap in an instant of time! She held it back till all the kitchen had been "redded up," and she and Dick were out under the locust tree at the foot of the garden, watching the moon climb up over Lyme Hills, and listening to the gurgle of frogs in the river-banks.

"Dick," she began, in a soft rush, "grandsire gave us girls each three hundred dollars."

Her husband drew on his pipe in a characteristic "moderateness," his narrow, bright eyes on her happy face. Even as far as Pettipaug, Richard La-May was dubbed "terr'ble hom'ly in the face," but Hallie avowed naively that she admired his lank jaws, saturnine smile, and long, lean figure more than the accepted lines of masculine comeliness.

"Well," he said at length, "warn't in the will, any place."

She told him of the gift.

"Great King Agrippy!" shaken from his dry calm. "That's what I call actin' like a white man on Than's part."

"You know what I'm goin' to do with it?" she leaned toward him from her

end of the bench, and stretched an eager hand to him.

Dick stroked the hand, strong, pliant-fingered, the hand of a musician.

"Goin' to bank it for a rainy day," he mocked.

"Dicky!" She swept a glance over the tranquil evening world, as if to challenge the rain to fall upon her from such a sky.

"Well, then, you're a-goin' to lend it to me."

"Do you want it?" Her voice was wondering.

"It's you or a mortgage on the farm."

"Not a mortgage!" Hallie said the word as if she named some gruesome thing. "Are we so poor as that?"

"I don't 'low it ever entered that pretty head o' yours that Deacon Small's widow might be willin' to sell that pasture lot o' hers next to mine," he drawled, his face twisted in a dry smile.

Hallie stared.

"But I've thought on it consid'ble. Three good acres more, added to mine, would mean about the best pasturage in this county."

"Yes?" She could not follow him.

"An' that would mean more cows, an' that would be a milk route over to Pettipaug."

"My stars!" gasped his wife. "What we want a milk route for?"

"It's a chance, sister, for a consid'ble little sum o' money each year, an' if I don't make a bid for it, some other chap will. I hate like poison to mortgage, but I can't lose the chance. Widow's goin' to leave, an' everythin's for sale cheap, right now."

"Oh, I know that," cried the girl excitedly. "I want to buy her piano. She'll sell it for just three hundred dollars. It's good as new, an' the loveliest tone!"

Again the silence that always went before his words. "What you want a piano for?"

"Why, to play on, goosie."

"You can't play."

"Yes, I can; an' I'm goin' to take lessons o' Professor Fordyce, to Pettipaug. I'll pay for 'em with my butter an' egg

money. I don't want new gounds nor hats nor trips up to Middletown. You know how I love music, dear, don't you? An' how grandsire never would let me play a note, an' how I found the key o' the piano where he'd hid it, an' used to bribe little Jud to be sentinel while grandsire was away, so as I could practice?"

"I guess I've heard o' more'n one o' your on-reliable ways. I view it I'm a remarkable valiant fashion o' man to wed you." He pulled the little soft curls of hair close to her neck.

"Music is mor'n anythin' in the whole wide world to me, 'cept Patty an' you, an' if I could just have a piano o' my own!" Her joy flowed back upon her; she laid her free hand on his breast. "Oh, Dick, dear, it's the sweetest little sister o' a piano! 'Twill just fit into our fore-room, 'tween the windows."

"Whar you cal'late to get time to play it? Farmers' wives ain't credited generally with many spare hours."

"Why, there's hours an' hours when you're down to the meadows hayin', or over in the timber lots. I'm lonely then." She said it softly, not to wound. "Nobody comes in nor goes by, an' there ain't a sound but the birds. An' then, winter evenin's, think how pretty 'twill be—you a-readin' by the fire, an' me playin' the old songs."

She was away on her dream steed, riding on the clouds. "I'll play the loveliest music! I can just hear it singin' in my head now, an' when I sit down to grandsire's piano it just runs off the tips o' my fingers."



Felicity sat as still as some trapped wood creature.

"You wait till I've had my milk route a couple o' years, an' I'll get you full as good a piano as any Small's folks ever owned." His ironical voice softened, he beat her hand gently on his knee.

Hallie looked like a child from whom a treat is withdrawn till "by and by." "I want it now, *now!*" she cried, a passion of protest in her voice.

The man considered the stars pricking out in the soft black sky; he drew on his pipe deeply, then shook the hot ashes out on the path. "I ain't able to tell one tune from another—'Ol' Hundred' an' 'Yankee Doodle's' the same to me—so I can't altogether get inside your feelin's, little girl." He put his

free arm around her closely. "But I'll say I wish you could have your piano an' play on it all day if you take comfort in it, but it can't be done yet. I can't lose the chance o' that milk business. Why, it's the biggest thing ever came my way!"

"But, Dick, why can't we have both?" piteously.

"I ain't goin' to ask you to lend me your money if you don't feel to want to—it's yours to do as you're a mind to; but this is my house, an' I ain't goin' to have a piano brought into it the same day I mortgage it to buy land."

"Why not?" Hallie drew away from him sharply, her eyes burned with hot fires.

Silence followed her question; then Dick's voice, slower even than its wont, and free from its ironic color, began: "I guess you don't call home my father or mother very clear, Hallie, 'cept maybe that they was always counted a pretty unsuccessful couple. I ain't talkin' again' 'em. I deem I set by my parents mor'n most. But one o' the earliest words I call home is hearin' a man over to Gilead say to another: 'You heard Dick LaMay sold his new ox cart an' yoke o' young steers?' An' the other fellow laugh an' answer: 'Yes, an' here comes his wife with the cart an' oxen on her head.' I looked, an' there down the street was mother walkin' long, smilin' an' feelin' dreadful fine, all decked out in a new gound an' a grand hat clean from Boston on her head."

"I don't care anythin' for pretty clothes." Hallie sent a quick glance at her plain print dress.

"An' after that I noticed—I guess I was a kind o' an observin' boy—that whenever father'd sell a piece o' woodland or a good mowin', mother'd get some new fashion o' luxury out o' it; the bow window there, or a silk gound, or the set o' sprigged china. It got to be the town joke—'Mis' Richard LaMay with the yoke o' steers on her head.'"

"I ain't that kind o' a wife!" she cried out, hurt.

Dick went on, in steady disregard:

"So I made up my mind that when my affairs come to the borrowin' place, it should be seen 'twas for a business advantage, an' not because I hadn't government 'nough in my own house to keep my wife waitin' for a convenient season for her pleasures." He paused; this was a long speech for Dick LaMay, famed for laconic dryness. Then, with a chill finality: "There won't be any piano in this house just now."

Hallie sat in a stunned silence. She could not thread the dim alleys of the man's childhood, to see with him the shiftless family, nor grasp his pride of thrift before a world that had prophesied him a chip of that poor block. Her inheritance from the hot-blooded old sailor grandfather, "crowded with his whimsies," surged redly in her.

"You are mean!" she cried. Oh, significant New England word, holding packed into its four letters all that a more fluent society can express of cruelty and ill dealing!

Dick's pipe dropped from his fingers in sheer amaze at the word flung at him by this, his gentle wife, who, in a year of marriage, had never once contraried him. He could not guess, by any nimble twistings of his brain, what "concord of sweet sounds" pulsing in her blood had been jarred to silence, what palace of dreams built within her heart had been ground to ashes, by his harsh fiat.

"I wouldn't say that word, Harriet," he told her very quietly.

Even in the hurry of her blood, there flashed a quiver of memory that only once before had she ever heard her name from Dick: "I, Richard, take thee, Harriet, for better, for worse."

"You are mean!" she repeated, and this time her beautiful voice was pitched to a shriek. "Just for your pride for what folks say, you'll deny me the greatest happiness I can have, a pleasure that don't harm a soul, an' wouldn't cost you—"

"Harriet, that's enough!" Nothing of her easy-going Dick spoke in this stern man. "It ain't necessary to hear any more o' this subject."

"It ain't necessary to hear any more o' any subject from me," cried Hallie, like a furious child. "I shan't speak to you ever, till I'm begged an' beseeched to, an' you needn't expect it."

"I shan't trouble you with my conversation, either," the man answered, as childishly as she, although his manner was as calm as a judge's. "Good night."

In a moment Hallie saw him by the kitchen table, lighting a lamp. She sat alone in the darkness, sorry, excited, and queerly frightened. It occurred to her sharply that she knew only the Dick of mellow mood and unvexed temper. What was he like when crossed? A cobweb of tradition drifted through her brain concerning his grandfather's contest with old Parson Card, in which he had sat, Sabbath after Sabbath, for thirty years, on the meetinghouse steps because he had vowed never to enter it during the parson's reign. Suppose Dick were like that? Then her injury swept her anew, and she throbbed with the anguish of her disappointment. The deep, hidden nerve of her resentment had been touched and beat savagely. "I won't be the one to speak; he's got to be sorry first."

She marched sturdily up to the house, and began to mix bread for morning. Through the sitting-room door she could see Dick reading the county paper in great tranquillity. Presently he laid down the paper, wound the clock, and did the usual tasks pointing to bed. Then he disappeared up the steep stairs. Hallie waited till all sounds overhead had ceased; then she, too, stole up to bed. Dick was sleeping as peacefully as if he had given her the usual tender good-night kiss. "He don't feel things like I do," she thought bitterly, as she lay with hot, sleepless eyes, hearing the old clock strike the hours.

That same evening, whirling with destiny for Patience and Hallie, Felicity, the little sister, rose from the supper table, and, leaving the washing of the dishes—her own lawful occasion—to whomsoever it might concern, went a-gypsying along the Marsh Road. She

loved this walk, because the marshes offered to her the whole alembic of the year. In May they were golden with cowslip; June saw them all pied with daisies white; autumn flaunted them out in gorgeous black-eyed Susans and joe-pye weed; December kept one latest spoil, over the gray rocks of their marge—the bittersweet. Felicity knew them all, and hovered over each blossom, eager "to learn the secret of the weeds' plain heart," and "the dim beauty at the heart of things."

To-night some stir of the blood set her feet into a path not trod for years, the climbing road to Joshua's Heights. This hill, famed for its wide prospect, had once been the haunt of Gilead youth on outdoor merrymakings. But when "Cap'n" Joshua Treadway, owner of the Heights, had been gathered to his fathers, his heir, a bleak man from foreign regions, known vaguely as "out West," had forbidden, by signs, notices, and the menace of his own fierce person, any trespassing; so the picnic parties had sought other camping places. The stranger, in his time, had died also, and the old hill had been left tenantless, but had never regained its lost favor. Felicity had not been up it since she was a child, and her feet went timidly now. The trees grew thick to the very top, so that the wide view rewarded the climber with a keen surprise. The kingdoms of the earth stretched out before her; the cattle upon a thousand hills grazed upon Lyme slopes, and forever the ancient river sought the eternal sea.

Felicity drew in all the loveliness of the world in a long, happy sigh; then she looked about for a seat. In a green clearing stood Cap'n Joshua's house, ancient, shaken by storms, but still fronting sun and frost gallantly, with its stout oak beams. She sat down on the doorstone, and examined the world surrounding her. The grassy plat was ringed by a circle of trees, of every pleasant green, from the somberness of firs to the delicate silver of birches. Little mossy paths led away into the thicket, to the spring and other haunts that she remembered. The grass was

clipped, and many beds of gay flowers intercepted its green.

"Why, I should deem folks tended 'em every day," she thought in wonder. "There's a Jack rose, too, in bloom, an' on my soul! I believe there's a tea bush full o' buds." Suddenly it seemed of an uncanny queerness that such floweriness should spring up at old Joshua's doorstep; she wished she were in her mother's sitting room, stitching long, dull seams.

"Wonder if they sowed themselves?" she said aloud.

"No, I planted 'em last spring." The voice came from right at her side.

Felicity sat as still as some trapped wood creature, while all the silly old wives' tales she had ever heard about "ha'nts" and the dead, unquiet in sinful graves, raced through her brain.

"Ain't they doin' fine, don't you think?" went on the voice.

The tone was so gentle that she took courage to look around. A tall boy leaned against the porch, and smiled down on her, with a smile that was like sunshine caught in perpetual enchantment. He was ragged, barefoot, and tanned to a warm amber, but his lithe figure stood in a pose as graceful as a picture, his hands were long and fine, and his eyes of a dark beauty, like her Sister Hallie's. Felicity smiled up at him in a startled sweetness.

"You mark that tall lily, there?" A brown hand pointed. "That's a rare kind; it don't grow in this country, but I'm a-goin' to try it. Won't you come see it close?" His voice was like honey dripping on the rocks, and though his phrases were the Pettipaug ones she knew, here and there a slipping slur on a word told her that he was not all of her country.

He guided her among his flowers, showing her some she had never seen, pointing out old friends, touching each one with a gentleness like a caress. Felicity forgot her shyness, forgot his shabbiness, forgot that he was a stranger whose very name she did not know, and threw herself into the joys of the gardener—deep speech of mulching, slipping, and transplanting—till the vio-

let light faded out in the valley, and night began to sift down upon the lonely hills.

"It's real dark," she murmured, in a soft flutter. "I got to go."

The stranger gathered a rose, a wonderful deep pink, with a heart of exquisite perfume.

"This is the first bloom it's ever had—please wear it." He fastened it in the bosom of her dress. "'Tis lovely!" he said, and again the liquid note of his voice was strange to her ears.

"I never saw one like it," she told him, blushing as charming a color as the flower. "Do you know its name?"

"It grows in my own country. They sent it to me."

Felicity's innocent eyes questioned him.

"That's Italy." He motioned her to a seat on a rock, and stretched himself upon the grass beside her, at ease to tell a tale. "I was born there—oh, a great while ago," and suddenly he laughed, a perfect note of mirth, clear and sweet.

She forgot the night drawing in upon them, and laughed, too, shyly.

"Way over there!" she murmured, wide-eyed with the strangeness of it, for had he claimed Mars as his birthplace, it would have been no farther out of her ken.

"An' my name's Austen Marie Treadway—ain't that New England an' Italy in consultation for you!" The air again was silvered with his laughter. "Did you ever hear o' ol' Cap'n Joshua Treadway?"

"Why, yes; this hill's named for him."

"So 'tis. He had a son, a sea captain like himself, that took his ship to Italy one time, an' married a pretty girl there. They were my father an' mother. The ol' cap'n disinherited his son on account o' his marriage with a foreign heathen."

"Are folks heathens in Italy?" wistfully; could any one so gallant be given over to strange gods?

"The same thing to him—Catholics." He smiled without bitterness. "I can't remember my father; he died when I was so little. By an' by my mother an' my grandfather both died; there was

no money left for me, an' my mother's people were pitiful poor. Then a queer thing happened. My father's sister, that hadn't spoken to him for years, heard o' the little chap lef' forlorn in Italy, an' she got one o' her sea-captain friends to bring me over to her in Maine."

"An' she raised you?" Surely this was a tale!

"Like her own son, for she hasn't any children. So I became a good New England boy, an' a——"

"Protestant?" softly.

"Ah," it was a wholly foreign sound, "if I am a good Christian, does it matter which?"

"No," Felicity Tripp, descendant of Cotton Mather, heard a voice saying, as if it came from some other girl.

"I was brought up to my uncle's trade, a jeweler in the city. I hated it, always bendin' over little, foolish bits of pieces in a hot room."

"I know." Felicity's cry was from miles of ruffling and thousands of tucks.

"I got sick here," he touched his chest, "an' the doctor said I must live outdoors. So they let me be what I longed to be always—a gardener—an' come here to raise seeds an' plants for the city market."

"Do you live in that house?"

"It belongs to me, an' all this hill. My ol' grandfather was sorry at the last, an' couldn't forget his wicked son, after all. So I shall have a house an' a cow an' chickens an' ducks, an' flowers—flowers—flowers!"

"Oh!" the girl's voice thrilled rapturously. "I could work in flowers all day, an' never be tired!"

"Come see mine in the sunshine! Soon? To-morrow?"

"To-morrow's the Sabbath——"

"Day after? Ah, yes, please!" He bent his beautiful eyes down close to hers, and Felicity, lifting her candid look to his, felt her tranquil heart throb with a poignant joy, and, of a sudden, out of all reason, loved this ragged stranger.

"Yes," in a sound faint as a breath; "in the afternoon."

"Ain't I to know your name, so as I

can say it over: 'She's a-comin' to-morrow—to-day—*now*!'"

"Felicity Tripp." It was as if she gave him herself with her name, her voice was awed with the simple saying of it.

"Felicity!" He dwelt on each vowel in a liquid softness. "Great happiness. They understood when they christened you, didn't they?"

"It was my grandmother's name," sedately, but her eyes smiled back an understanding.

"Come, you must go." He drew her to her feet. "I'll take you through the wood."

Still holding her hand, he led her down the dark path, bending the branches back from her face, telling her of adventures in the land of flowers. Felicity could not follow his thread; only the sound of his voice was in her ears like water running over stones. When they stepped out from the woods in to the Marsh Road, Austen lifted her hand, touched it with his lips, and vanished, blotted into the night. On that instant, a figure stood up at the gap in the fence, and Than's voice of displeasure met her:

"That you, Phil? It's too late for you to be traipsin' round on the marshes alone."

Felicity, in a gold and purple dream, heard his voice as from a far shore. "I'm sorry, Than; I got overtaken by the dark." She soothed him from old habit of submission rather than from any clear understanding.

"You girls need some one to take care o' you," he told her, mellowed, as always, by her gentleness.

He put his arm around her strongly, and, so holding her to himself, took her along the narrow path. Felicity did not start—Than had always been a kindly big brother to her; but to-night her young eyes questioned him strangely.

The river was gray glass; the air vibrated with the whir and drone of small-winged creatures; the roads were inches deep in sand; over river, sky, and fields hung a yellow fog through which the sun sucked up every drop of fresh-



"But, there—you're wedded to one o' them LaMays—I guess I needn't to go into particulars 'bout their dispositions."

ness. Pettipaug township was enduring "a dreadful tejus spell o' weather."

Hallie, from her doorstep, pondered the scorched, dusty road winding down to Gilead, in a mood of hot distaste. She must go to her old home this morning, because it was her mother's birthday, a high fête in the family. She looked from her clean print dress to the road, and from the steaming sun to her heavy basket, and sighed wearily. Out by the barn Dick was harnessing the mare and the colt to the democrat, preparations for a cool, swift drive. Should she mount in beside him silently, and let him guess her direction?

At that moment Dick threw down his whip, and hurried into the house. She moved aside, but he passed her as blank of all expression as if she were the wall. She watched him rummage in the sitting-room davenport, in the old lowboy, and even in her workbasket. Some vital link in his day's chain of progress was missing. How often her nimble fingers and bright eyes had found just such treasure for him, since, for all his shrewd conduct of affairs, Dick was as unregarding as a small boy where he left his belongings. Her fingers tingled with helpfulness, her eyes smarted with tears, yet she leaned against the doorpost, still as a stone, till he came out—hot, frowning, and unsatisfied.

"Dick!"—the word formed on her lips, then died there, while she stood with sullen eyes, watching him drive down the lane and vanish in a cloud of dust. She ran into her tidy sitting room, now "an hurrah's nest" of man's devising, and flung herself on the lounge.

"If I could just play me one tune, I'd feel comforted," she cried, in helpless pity for herself, her fingers beating out a

measure on her knee.

Four weeks had passed since Dick and Hallie had quarreled, and not one word had either spoken. In the deep nearness of a lonely farm, they had worked together, eaten their meals opposite each other at the little table, sat together on the bench in the twilight, all in an iron silence. Difficulties and mistakes had clogged the wheels of their daily living, ridiculous to laughter for an outsider—tragic to the dogged, wounded man and woman. Hallie had long ago abandoned any hope that Dick would yield, the stubborn will of old Grandsire LaMay had shut his

mouth forever. It was for herself that she trembled; the quick of her love was slowly dying, crushed to numbness by a great weight, which was growing heavier every day. Soon she would not care if they went on this way all the rest of their lives, dumb as images.

She tied on her hat, lifted her basket, and set out ploddingly for Gilead, lost in her own dull musings.

"Hallie LaMay, you step right in for a dish o' chat with me!" an old, cracked voice summoned her imperiously.

A little nut of an ancient woman, dry and brown as bark, but bright-eyed and dramatic still, sat seeding raisins on the doorstep of a house so burdened with years that it leaned forward into the road and sagged down in the middle.

"I can't sit, Aunt Wealthy," Hallie told the old woman. "I got to get down to mother's 'fore the sun's any higher, or I shall give over, it's so hot." In spite of her words she sank listlessly onto the step.

"The ol' Boston! What you a-footin' it for when I just see Dick drivin' like Hewdie down the road with his span?"

"He's goin' to mill," faintly; then, in a confused dodging away from this subject: "This's Uncle 'Bijah's month, ain't it?"

"Law, yes; we're a-sojournin' in this ol' shack, sufferin' all the privations o' the Pilgrim Fathers, I tell him," chuckled the old woman.

"However did you start such works a-goin', Aunt Wealthy?" Hallie inquired eagerly. She had heard the tale of the monthly trekkings, long ago a nine days' Gilead wonder, but now it caught her in a personal grasp.

"'Bijah's a LaMay, an' I'm a Holton, an' there ain't two sotter tribes in the whole o' New England. I guess that's the Genesis an' Rev'lution o' the matter," the old woman began, with a rich taste for the telling of her tale. "The winter afore I was wedded, father built him a new house—'tain't thought so much on now, when modern improvements is abroad in the land, but it was a pretty handsome fashion o' domicile sixty year ago." Hallie followed the pointing finger to the great house, wide-

porched and large-windowed, that stood just down the road.

"Then father died—a month afore the wedding 'twas—an' left the house to me, all the child he ever had. I thought it 'twas complete to have such a grand home to live bride in. But, landy me, I wasn't 'quainted with Abijah LaMay then, to the extent I am now. He warn't a-goin' to leave the hearth of his ancestors—not he! His great-great-grandsire built this house, him that fought at the takin' o' Quebec, an' ev'ry oldest son since had dwelt in it; an' 'Bijah warn't a-goin' to be ousted from it by no wife Pettipaug township was able to supply."

"Folks have to move sometimes," murmured her listener, "an' houses ain't a-goin' to last always."

"You'd think this one was a-goin' to endure till Last Trump, to hear 'Bijah," retorted the sprightly narrator. "I guess I wore out them arguments, an' a good few more on him. But, there—you're wedded to one o' them LaMays, 'Bijah's own brother's grandson—I guess I needn't to go into particulars 'bout their dispositions. I'm a-givin' Hallie, here, a kind o' map o' the LaMay country," she suddenly shrieked out at an old man entering the kitchen.

Old 'Bijah smiled benevolently. "I just bringed you in a noble pail o' water from the spring," he mumbled out in a mild voice.

"Spring!" She lowered her voice. "Pack a bucket to the next county for water, when there's a pump right in my kitchen, up there! We talked an' we argued, an' we pleaded, an' we wep'—leastwise one o' us did. But 'Bijah, he wouldn't give up the home o' his ancestors, an' I wouldn't give up my good, new house."

"This is a dreadful old, poor house," Hallie pondered its cramped, dark interior impartially.

"Great King Agrippy, Hal, there ain't a door'll stay shut, nor a window that'll stay open, an' the floors is the Rocky Road to Dublin! Well, to end my story, it looked one spell as if there warn't goin' to be a weddin' up to our house, for all the banns was bein' called on

Sabbaths. Then I had one o' my ideas—'mother's inspirations,' the children call 'em—an' I says: 'We'll live in both houses, month in, month out, turn an' turn.' 'Bijah caught right a-holt, an' we've done so sixty-one year come October ninth." She snapped the seeds out of a raisin vehemently.

"Ain't it been awful inconvenient, Aunt Wealthy, swingin' all your belongin's back an' forth so?"

"Awful ain't the term, child. An' for 'Bijah, too, shiftin' his critters into the diff'ent barns; he says it spiles their dispositions. I helt out on one p'int—my posies is all up there, an' 'Bijah, he keeps his garden down here."

"Terr'ble inconvenient!" repeated Hallie, in her brooding eyes a picture of uncle and aunt laden with buckets of flour, bags of grain, and piles of garments, plodding to and fro along the road between the two houses.

The old woman smiled a shrewd, affectionate smile. "I can't think o' nothin' more inconvenient," she agreed again, "'cept givin' up 'Bijah!"

Hallie rose, her eyes still absent, her voice muffled. "Some situations can't be made to fit any compromise," she said somberly.

"Don't you believe that word, Hallie." The old woman spoke quickly; her cracked voice softened; her little, dry hand, streaked with blue veins, laid hold of the girl's arm urgently. "There's a way out if you've got love enough to make it. Tell Dick I inquired for him. I thought he looked kin' o' poorly this mornin'," she added, in her usual tone. She watched the girl down the road with narrowed eyes. "She's come up again' the LaMay disposition, an' she's beat out tryin' to know how to act. Pretty little creatur'!"

The heat was sickening as Hallie plowed through the dust, bowed with the basket. She tried to work out some plan of mutual accommodation such as had kept the old couple happy, but her brain was thick, like glue. Wheels sounded behind; Dick, cool, at ease under his carriage top, drove along, his horses going slowly. Hallie stared at him numbly, her face gray with dust,

her hair damp round her brow, her crisp skirts draggled and limp, a pitiful figure of heat and weariness. The horses checked suddenly, a strong hand on the reins, then started up as again their driver's face hardened.

At the edge of Joshua's Heights, she sat down under a wild apple tree to rest. There ran through her brain a dark story of a Pettipaug girl, deserted of her lover, who had waded out into the river till she reached the channel—Hallie's hot face felt suddenly cold, she trembled.

Voices filtered down to her along the wood path, gay with laughter. Her Sister Felicity stepped out into the light, followed by a strange man. Felicity carried a great bouquet of flowers, and her face was exquisite with a soft happiness. The man was so handsome that Hallie caught her breath, and he moved under the low-hung trees with the grace of some forest creature free in his own environment. Felicity turned her head back to him to catch his words, and he smiled on her in a way the watcher recognized instantly, for so Dick had smiled at her a hundred years ago.

"Felicity," the sister called gently.

Felicity flushed all over her fairness, but her composure held. "Did you walk over, Hallie?" she asked, bending till her blond braids lay against her sister's dark hair, for a kiss.

"This is Austen Treadway," Felicity went on. "He's given me this beautiful bouquet for mother's birthday."

Hallie offered him her hand trustfully. If he smiled so on her Felicity, he must be good, so thought the granddaughter of "whimsical Cap'n Tripp." "Won't you come, too, to the celebration? Mother'll be proper pleased to see any friend o' sister's."

"I wish it was so I could," answered the young man tranquilly, while blushes flew their red flags in Felicity's cheeks. "But I got a power o' work to get through by noon. Thank you just the same." He smiled on them both with his enchanting simplicity.

Patience was in the post office, sorting the mail, just brought by young

Judson. She was in a very flame of spirits, her cheeks red, her eyes alight.

"Heard the news, Hal?" she cried, throwing her arms around her sister. "I'm postmaster o' Gilead!" She waved a thin blue envelope in the air.

"Oh, Patty!" Hallie hugged her sister, and danced about the cubby-hole.

"I got the word last night, an' the folks have been a-pourin' in ever since, an' letters! Look at 'em!" She shook a pile of envelopes at her sister.

"What's that?"

Patience, laughing self-consciously, opened an oblong package carefully wrapped in white paper. Inside was a pretty basket plaited of colored grasses, and within this a branch of cool, green leaves to which hung the glossy, glowing balls of ripe, red cherries.

"Why, there isn't a scred o' writin' to it! Whoever——"

"It's Lyman Gillette," laughed Patience again. "He puts things like that in the mail bag for me. He can, 'cause he's the last one to lock it."

"Who's he?" It seemed to Hallie that her sisters were taking to themselves strange play boys.

"He's the fellow took round Patience's petition to get the office." Nathaniel Brooks stood in the doorway. "I've inquired 'bout him, Pat, an' I hear he bears a good reputation." He grinned derisively at her.

Patience "made up a face" at him shamelessly. "Think I'd know him if he didn't?" Then, slipping away from this personal groove: "Hallie, you sick? You look real kind o' wilted."

"Brew her up some salts an' senna or gentian tea," advised Than. "Ain't any manner o' need for doctor's services, Hallie, if Patience puts her mind onto your complaint."

"It's the weather," fended Hallie. "I got all heated up comin' here."

"Go play us a tune," urged Patience. "That'll rest you good."

"You tell me what's wrong between Dick and Hallie," Patience questioned Than, in an eager whisper, when her sister was gone; she sought Than in all the crises of living, although she spurned his suggestions upon her

actions therein. "I saw Dick this mornin', and he looked uglier'n mud, an' whipped off 'fore I could get a word at him. You can see for yourself that poor child's down in the dolefuls."

"It ain't needful you should do anythin' about it," admonished Than strongly. "Dick LaMay's cap'ble o' managin' his own affairs an' his own wife without your assistance."

"I ain't so sure of it," retorted the girl, crinkling into one of her elfish smiles. "I've got a poorish opinion o' the seem o' most menfolks; an' as for Hallie, she's softer'n a baby—soft as your Felicity, most." She thrust this at him with such suddenness that the man started. "Here, take your paper, an' go congratulate mother. I want to see Hallie, while she's playin'."

Nathaniel blocked the door. "Patience," he said soberly, "I want to tell you I'm glad you've got the post office. I was set again' your havin' it, but now I'm glad." He held out his hand.

He looked very big and handsome, filling the doorway, a slight color in his weathered cheeks, a pleasant light in his blue eyes. Patience struck her hand into his with her boyish enthusiasm. "Thank you, Than."

"I gave you this office," he went on, holding her hand tight. "You'd have had no manner o' show again' me, an' I gave it to you freely because o' what you said about me ownin' the mill, an' my own farm, an' all like that, an' you havin' just this one possession. I didn't want to grab the earth—an' from a woman, too."

Patience had flushed resentfully at his first words; now she laughed, with sweetness mixed in her mirth. "You rile me all up, Than," she cried; "yet for the life o' me I can't stay riled—you're so kind o' little—an' big." She wrung his hand, and, elusive in her slimness, slipped out of the door.

Hallie had run to the piano, whirled onto the stool, and dropped her hands upon the keys. Her fingers fumbled, slid, and crashed out a discord—she could not play! She had sacrificed Dick's happiness, and her own, to her music, and now she was empty of all

harmonies. She turned a woeful face on Patience.

"Harriet Tripp, you tell me what ails you!" Patience sought to clasp her in her arms, her words were sharp, but her tone soft with sympathy.

"Nothin', dear." Hallie's eyes looked sunken in her face; then quickly: "You know a man called Treadway? The prettiest kind o' a boy, only foreign lookin'."

"I know who you mean. He came yesterday to get his mail. Been trampin' way to Pettipaug; thought we didn't have a post office here. He's livin' up on Joshua's Heights."

"He's goin' all round with Felicity. I met 'em."

Patience was unimpressed. "I wouldn't worry about that," she counseled her sister with finality. "Felicity's all taken up with Than. She wouldn't thank the king to be her brother 'longside o' him."

That evening the mansion was left alone, white, flower-scented in the moonlight. Hallie had gone home, the boys were celing, Patience and Carline were on a visit to a sick neighbor. Felicity minded the house, seated on the low step of the porch. Hills, village, river, all were flooded with a silver enchantment and still as a vision; sweet, hot scents stole up from garden and hedge. The calm, sure world of plow and needle seemed to float away far out of ken on this magic sea, and to become "such stuff as dreams are made of."

She pressed to her lips a rose that Austen had given her that morning, breathed in its subtle perfume, kissed its delicate petals. How beautiful life was! Day after day, released from old grand-sire's iron rule, free as the sun and air, she had delved in the good red earth, bringing to pass miracles of bloom, or, unheeded by her family, had slipped away to Joshua's Heights, there to weed and water and tend Austen's plants in the warmth of his smiles and the music of his voice. There was no deceit in this; innocent as her own flowers, she was deep in a child's pretty plot, which

to share with any grown-up is to spoil. She did not know that she loved Austen, only that he had for her an abiding charm, only that in his presence she was sweetly content.

A strong step beat on the path. Than Brooks greeted her pleasantly: "Where's all the folks, Felicity?"

"All gone off." She made room for him. "I'm keepin' house by myself."

Than seated himself beside her. In the moonlight she looked some flower of the heat, gauzy, ethereal. He took one of her hands, and pressed it between both his. "Felicity," he said, in a gentle voice, "I had a tell with your mother to-day 'bout you."

The girl turned the innocence of her glance upon him, her lips parted in a long breath.

"They're favorable to me," he went on, in his even voice. "They know all there is to find out 'bout me. Now, I want to hear what you have to say for your part."

The girl sat quite still, her lips trembling faintly.

"You set by me, don't you, dear?" He drew her into the circle of his big arm, her virginal slenderness hidden by his broad shoulders. He waited in the silence.

"I haven't frightened you, Phillie?" He tried to see her drooping face. "You ain't surpris'd? All the folks know how 'tis between us. Mother's talked 'bout it sights, an' Patience was jokin' me on you this mornin'! I've considered this matter for a couple o' years, now, pretty steady."

At last she spoke, in a gasping little voice: "I thought o' you like a brother, Than."

"No, you didn't," coolly. "I don't feel like a brother to you. I want you for my own; I think the world o' you, little dearie." His words were coming with difficulty, for he was a man given to locking his emotions deep within himself.

"It's a suitable thing," he told her, with more assurance, now he trod among materialities; "my farm an' this adjoinin', an' me bein' right here to look after your folks, an' always havin'

been a son to your mother, you might say."

"Oh, Than," she quivered. "I feel like a little girl; I wish we could stay so—like yesterday."

"You're not a little girl," he admonished her with his calm tenderness; "nineteen last April." And then, against his own words, he took her in his arms, stroking her soft hair and kissing her quivering lips in the manner of comforting a child.

Felicity lay still, a trapped animal, with just wisdom enough not to struggle. She felt as if Fate, beneficent, inexorable, had reached down to lift her with a mild, unrelenting hand out of her primrose paths of dalliance to set her feet in the hard highway of duty where she must walk forever. She heard her mother and Patience coming up the path. She slipped herself free of his arms, and, with a flutter of thin draperies, fled through the house and down the path. She ran with reckless speed till she reached the bottom of the hill, where it ended at an old, deserted house, and there, in the broad moon-beam, she sank down on the broken stone fence, breathing desperately.

"What's up?" a cheerful voice; then quickly: "Felicity, my darlin', what is it?" Austen Treadway jumped up from the other end of the wall, and ran to her.

"I was frightened," faintly. Her head swam from her race, her slim body swayed piteously.

The boy came close to her, and, kneeling on a fallen stone, put his arms around her, and drew her head to his breast.

"My little darlin', *cara mia!*" he whispered. "Oh, my little Happiness, my Perfect Content, I love you with all my heart."

The earth drenched in the white fire of the moon, the golden melody of the boy's voice, the burning words of love he whispered against her cheek—Felicity was drowsed as by a love potion.

"Austen!" she murmured, her heart beating against his.

The boy continued to pour out his love for her, all the New Englander

swept away in the flood of Latin romance.

"Oh, *cara mia*, you love me back? A little? You must. Don't keep me miserable, waitin'!" he implored.

"Yes," whispered Felicity, a breath of sound.

"Say it—I love you, Austen Marie."

The girl trembled rapturously; then the words came quietly, a steadfast confession of faith: "I love you, Austen Marie."

They clung together in an ecstasy of purest love, he murmuring with kisses every name of adoration, she kissing him back. Gradually the New Englander, long submerged, rose to the surface: "We'll be wedded an' live up in the old house—'tis winter proof, I guess—an' we'll just surround ourselves with every flower that blows."

"Oh, yes," breathed the girl, lost in a sea of joy.

"An' won't there be a turang in ol' Gilead!" he laughed exultantly. "But I ain't on the town, quite, darlin'. I got the house an' land an' the flowers an' some money—'nough for taxes, anyhow—that grandsire left me. You won't care livin' 'long o' me in a ramshackle ol' house on the top o' a mountain, will you, sweetheart?"

"Oh, no!" She would have been happy if he had proposed an Indian tepee, or an Eskimo igloo.

The bell on the church chimed out nine slow, solemn strokes. "I got to go," protested Felicity sorrowfully, shaking herself from her dream. "Don't come; they'd see you, an', Austen—"

"Say, 'dear Austen!'" He held her from him that he might watch her still sweetness; there were tears in his eyes, his face was all moved.

"Dear Austen, let's have it a secret between us—a while."

"Of course," boyishly; "then by and by your mother's got to be told, an' my aunt an' uncle—they've been awful good to me—so as we can be wedded quick." He kept his arms about her as they climbed the hill. "Good night, sweetheart, *mia adorata!*" They kissed farewell with all the passion of their ardent, untired hearts.

Not a thought of Nathaniel Brooks and his claim stained the white radiance of Felicity's dreams that night. She lay in her maiden bed, frosted with moonbeams, in the great "east chamber," and "truly the name of that chamber was Peace."

Nemesis, though slow of foot, arrives. Morning woke the twice-pledged betrothed to a heavy consciousness of remorse and shame, strange visitors to that peaceful heart. She could not burn and thrill to agony as Hallie did, but she suffered a slow grinding of pain. She knew that she had never loved Than; if only she could find one hour of cold courage to break that pledged word! She saw herself striving to speak, and all her resolution whelmed in his calm, kind incredulity. He would not let himself understand. She was the same as wedded to him now, and—
—and—

The little garden close.
Thicket with lily and
red rose,

in "the Land of Heart's Desire," was shut against her forever. Only Austen's voice, wailing sorrowfully, would reach her in a mournful echo.

"I should think o' Hewdie was loose in this fam'ly," Patience told the colt, munching his oats in the warm darkness of the barn. Next to Than, the colt was her tried confidant; sometimes she considered him a superior one, as he never thrust in unwelcome advise-

ments. "Last night when I was over at Hallie's, she was up in the spare chamber, quiltin' like she was makin' ready for her own burial, an' Dick was smokin' on the bench, glummer'n a crab."

The colt blew out his breath gustily, and poked his velvet nose into her breast. "As for Felicity—well, she may be full o' rejoicin's over her tokenin' to Than, but she don't act like it."

Voices reached her from the moonlit garden, and, following them, she found Than and Felicity. That capricious jade, Pettipaug weather, had shifted from sultry heat to cool winds; a breeze blew now from the north, rustling the aspens till all their white leaves glittered.

"We'll just sail round the Light an' back," Than was saying pleasantly. "It's a night in a thousand for a sail, full moon an' a steady wind."

"It's so cold on the river, an' dark," trembled out Felicity.

"You wrap you up warm." His voice was soothingly firm. "Dark? You look at that moon, child."

"I feel real kind o' tired," pleaded the girl timorously.

"You're all beat out over that garden; it ain't worth the labor you put into it"—quite unmoved by her reluctance. "A sail'll rest you up good, feelin' the wind blow salt on you, an' hearin' the water ripple by."

"My country!" Patience pounced in



"Hallie," Patience spoke quietly, "catch hold, an' when I pull, you climb."

upon their retreat. "Don't you *seem* anythin' ever, Than Brooks? You an' me, we've got tar in our veins—we'd go to sea in a bowl, an' think it complete—but Felicity's scared o' a rowboat tied to the wharf. She'd a sight rather sit here on this bench, dry and snug."

Nathaniel paid no more heed than if a cricket had chirped in his path. "I don't often have things so that I can get a moonlight sail. I'd prize this one with you. You'd like to come, wouldn't you, dear?"

"Oh, yes," murmured the meek girl.

Without a glance at the discomfited Patience, he led Felicity, helplessly drooping, down toward the boat.

"She's scared o' him, my little sister is," Patience looked moodily after the darkening figures. "Than Brooks ought to wed a reg'lar termagant, that'd keep him somewhere near conduct." She shook a hard little fist at him. "I don't know where he'll meet up with a woman cap'ble o' copin' with his sotness—without he took me!" She dismissed the lovers from her anxieties with a light-hearted laugh. "Yes, mother, I'm a-comin'."

A pair of horses, with a smart carriage, stood at the door. "Why, Lyman Gillette, you drive 'way over from Pettipaug? That's what I call neighborly." She was all softness for the young mail clerk, her sharp little briers sheathed.

The handsome young fellow holding the horses smiled upon her with assurance.

"Ain't it kind o' a pretty night, Patience? I'd be real pleased if you would go ridin' with me."

"You needn't to ask twice, Lyman." Patience took his outstretched hand, but sprang light and quick into the carriage. As the horses trotted down the lane, she told herself, with a sly smile: "All the young fellows seem to be out a-loverin'."

They had a gay drive around Book Hill and back by the plains; and Patience, her blood all a-dance with wind and moonlight, bade her companion a merrily tender good night. Lyman was

certainly a likely young fellow, and as easy to manage as her Brother Hobart.

She saw the streak of light under Felicity's door vanish, as she entered; her sister was not yet asleep, then. She knocked and walked into the room.

Felicity sat on the floor, stretched limply across the low window sill, her yellow braids loosened all over her shoulders, her face buried in her arms. The moonlight shone like frost on the gold of her hair, the chill wind fluttered her nightgown about her.

The older sister slipped down on the floor. "Tell Patty, darlin'," she murmured. Although she was the smaller, she pulled her sister over into her arms with wiry strength. "I know somethin' plagues you. Tell sister! I won't say a word to contrary you, not if you've killed him an' thrown him into the Connecticut."

"Oh, Patty," the voice muffled through strands of hair, "I got to wed him!"

"No, you haven't," instantly; "not if you don't feel to."

"I got to wed him," monotonously.

"Good fathers!" Patience's register of oaths was a wide one. "I'd like to be told why!"

"He'll make me. I daren't tell him I won't," with weary resignation.

"What's turned you again' him so awful sudden? I always thought it was so you prized Than Brooks more'n the sun in heaven."

Felicity lifted the veil of her hair, and drew away from her sister, to regard her with large eyes of wonder that her shrewdness should blink so in the light of the obvious.

"I never did, never!" with rare violence; then, lapsing into her gentle melancholy: "He's so sot an' determined in his own way, Pat, an' he's so masterful! Why, I can hardly breathe my own breath, as you might say."

"You're kind o' worn out with him to-night 'cause o' his bein' so tejus 'bout goin' a-sailin'." Some blind instinct of justice and the rights of man pushed her on to be his advocate.

Felicity shuddered. "Oh, that black river an' the wind moanin' in the sail!"

"You'll see him in a pretty light again to-morrow," preached the sage. "Than's an honorable, upright, good man."

Felicity drooped her head on her sister's breast, a submissive Iphigenia. "I told him I'd wed him, an' I will—but it's—*it's hard.*"

"You shan't!" like a weathercock. "But what's started you off again' him *now*—?" A waft word of Hallie's beat through her brain. "You mean to tell me there's 'nother man?"

"Austen Marie," a meek confession. "Austen Marie *what?* That Italian foreigner?"

"He's Cap'n Joshua Treadway's own grandson!"

"Does he worship stone idols?" in an awed voice.

"I guess so," as a thing of no moment.

Patience swallowed hard—the prejudices of two centuries of New England Puritans; if her little, tender Felicity had set her heart upon a South Sea Islander, clothed in beads and prostrate before monstrous gods, she should not be thwarted! Truly, the brood of Cap'n Tripp were "crowded full o' whimsies."

"Has he spoke to you yet 'bout his—his feelin's?"

"He told me how 'twas with him the very night Than spoke out to me, an' I forgot Than an' my promised vow"—in a pitiable shame; then, in swift exultation: "Oh, Patty, if you could just see him once! He's different from any other man ever lived."

"I presume so," dryly. "He know 'bout Than yet?"

"I haven't seen him; that's the hardest part o' it. I don't know how I'm a-goin' to give up Austen an' live, but I got to, an' I suppose I shall make out to endure it somehow." Her voice was drearily patient.

"You listen to me, Felicity Tripp!" urgently, her gray eyes burning black in the shadowy room. "You go straight over to him, an' tell him you're sorrier'n death—but you can't go through with this marryin'."

"I don't dare. He'd persuade me over in five minutes; my will is just like a feather to a rock, by his."

For once deserving her name, the sister patiently explained, reasoned, and pleaded. Felicity would not argue, would not justify herself, would only say piteously, inflexibly: "I don't dare!" That bed rock of stubbornness which often is the foundation of soft and gentle natures had been reached, and the girl was capable of ruining three lives in the name of duty.

A gale of resolution swept the elder sister; she sprang up. "I won't have my sister trickin' that man a day longer—it's wicked! I'll tell him myself."

Felicity grasped both her hands as a drowning man might a rope. "Would you dare?"

"Dear," Patience made one last struggle, "it'll be a bitter drink for Than—can't you make it easier tellin' him yourself—not me, an outsider?"

Felicity sank back against the wall. "I can wed Than," she murmured in her sad refrain.

"I'll tell him!" stoutly.

"When?"

"Now."

Felicity stared agape, as Patience disappeared, without another word.

The girl seemed to herself entirely wild, yet her wits cried: "Now or never!" Down the path she ran, across the meadow to the house where Than lived with his widowed mother. All the house was dark save an upper window, where a dim lamp showed him standing by his bureau, unfastening his tie. Patience threw a pebble against the wall.

"Than!"

The man thrust his head out of the window. "Who's there?" in a strong voice.

"Hush! Me—Patience."

"House afire?"

"Forever—no! Come down!"

In a moment Than was beside her.

"What's happened? Quick!"

The girl crushed down an excited laugh; she wanted to scream and laugh in the same breath.

"Let's sit there, so as we shan't wake your mother." She ran through the dewy grass to an old garden seat.

Than regarded her with severity,

looming tall and broad above her. "It's eleven o'clock. If you've got any news that won't keep overnight, say it out. Then I'm a-goin' to take you right home an' tell Aunt Car'line to brew you up some doctor's trade to make you sleep."

Now Patience did laugh, an hysterical sound. What imp of folly had set her upon this mad emprise? Memory played her the cruel trick of showing her Than, a stolid, silent boy, holding in his arms his dead dog, and crying great, gulping sobs over it. He had told them all he "didn't care 'bout ol' Hero"; she had surprised him hidden in the woods.

"Somethin' to pay in the post office?" he suggested austerely.

The girl grasped her courage with both hands. "Than," her voice came pantingly, as if she were still running, "Felicity ain't happy."

"Think so?" warily.

"Felicity's dreadful young still—she don't know her own mind two hours runnin'; she—"

"Three years younger'n you, that's all," with cold decision. "But I don't view it that midnight's the time I want to discuss her disposition. Come!" He laid a heavy hand on her shoulder.

Out it burst: "She deemed she prized you enough—to—to wed you, but she don't."

The young man took it with provoking calm.

"I'll wait till I hear it from her, herself."

"Oh, Than, she *can't* tell you—she's afraid o' you!"

"What she afraid o' me for?" still unmoved. "You ain't."

"I ain't afraid o' anybody," simply, without bravado. "I begged an' beseeched her to tell you herself, but she couldn't. She's so shy an' timid, Felicity—is."

Nathaniel thrust his hands deep into his pockets.

"She send you this time o' night?"

"Can't you leave harpin' on the time!" trenchantly; then, softening to pity: "She's 'shamed to act so, an' she

feels for you, oh, dreadfully, but she can't go through with it, an' you've got to set her free!"

The young man pondered in silence. "There ain't another man, that's certain," was the sum of his putting two and two together.

Patience clenched her hands painfully in her lap. Why should she go farther with this cruel business? Let Felicity end it. She moistened her lips. "There is, Than," she whispered, so low that he had to bend to catch it.

He barked out a savage oath, and flung away into the night. In a minute he was back, saying, with steady coolness: "You got his name?"

"Austen Marie Treadway."

"That tramp! The fellow that's loony over plants, an' lives like a tinker on Joshua Heights!" His cold contempt protested her mind askew.

"Felicity loves posies like they were babies," urged the girl, "an' she'd think it complete to live like a gypsy all her days."

Before them both lifted the picture of the dainty, fair, sedate girl, exquisite in all her personality, stitching a fine seam in the shaded light of the mansion foreroom.

"Pat, you're cracked!"

The harshness of it did not affront the girl, throbbing with pity. She stood up close to him, and put a hand on either arm; through his shirt she could feel the great muscles, and her own slightness against his bulk touched her mind.

"I wish I was, Than. It ain't right in her, it ain't wise, but it's so."

"She shan't wed him!" with slow violence. "I'll keep hold o' her."

Patience felt the muscles cord and knot as his fists clenched. She put her head down against his arm, and hot tears of shame for her part in the misery of it, and sympathy for him, drenched the coarse cloth.

"Oh, don't you see that's the way to make her cling all the closer to him in her heart? Do you want to *force* a girl to wed you?"

"Yes."

"You mind Great-aunt Antoinette Bartlett, that was made to wed ol' Squire Gerrish, when her affections were fixed on young Parson Dennett?"

"You think Phil would jump into the mill pond?"

Patience fixed him solemnly with her great eyes, her voice thrilled in awe. "I don't know *what* she'd do, Than. We Tripps have got wild blood in us, an' if you cross us, it'll out in all sorts o' strangenesses."

"I'd 'a' ca'med down some o' that blood if I'd had the raisin' o' you!" With a rough twist of his shoulder, he freed her, and vanished, his strong tread sounding down the hill.

Patience waited, shivering in the moonlight chill, trembling with a fear that sucks the courage of the bravest—the sense of the pain of the world, which man that is born of a woman must endure. After a long time she saw Than coming toward her. Her heart swelled in her breast with compassion for her childhood's playfellow drinking his first cup of woe. Than had been fortune's favorite always.

He dropped down on the edge of her bench heavily, like a man tired out. His face looked sharp set and pallid, as if he had been through a sickness; his voice was dull.

"I'm willin' to take your word for this business to-night, Patience, but you tell Felicity she's got to send me a letter herself, to-morrow. She ain't afraid to do that, is she? If she writes herself how 'tis, I'll set her free as air, an' she can link herself up with any Tollux tribe she fancies. Now, you get 'long home." He started down the path without a glance at her.

"Don't you come, too, please; I ain't a mite scared to clip it——"

The man turned with an exasperated sound, like one who, in dreadful agony, is pricked by a pin. He seized her arm in a grip like iron, and pulled her along beside him. At her own door he loosed his grasp. Patience laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Than," she whispered, "I'm terr'ble, terr'ble distressed! I wish Felicity

could have felt to have it so!" And then, from some feeling she could not understand: "You don't lay it up again' me?"

She heard his breath draw in sharply; then, in a hard, fierce sob, he answered: "I've held her in my heart for years, the sweetest little thing! *You'd* have told me yourself!" He was gone.

She stood in the shadow of the kitchen arbor in a sad muse. What a coil this thing called life! Her roving glance caught a blur of white in the moonshine down in the fence corner.

"I declare I'm growin' as forgetful as an ol' granny!" she told herself, with her accustomed candor. "I lef' my white gound bleachin' on the bushes." Unregardful of the drenching dew, she strolled through the grass toward the fence.

How still the world was! How unlike to its noonday radiances of blue and gold, this vague and delicate beauty of shadows and suggestions! The church clock tolled twelve strokes, booming in her ears. The girl shivered queerly. "A goose went over my grave," she laughed, but the mirth choked on her lips. Why had she thought of graves? What was the matter with the night, that the wind moaned eerily, and the moon was swallowed up in blackness? She passed through the little back gate, and down the path toward the river, some will, not her own, drawing her steadily on. At the foot of the hill she shook herself, blinking her eyes, like a sleep-walker waking in an untoward place.

"What am I doin' here?" she asked herself in a kind of terror, and yet her feet moved on, out of her control. She caught the low-hung bough of a blasted tree as if to hold herself back. "I'm crazier than any loon that—— Hark!"

A voice, as thin and faint as the cry of a new-born baby, a pin prick of sound in the great silence! The girl ran like a wild thing straight toward the river. She came up with a jerk against the meadow bars. The cry again; this time she thought it was her name—"Patty!"—and at that her feet seemed shod with wings.

PART II.

Hattie LaMay had rushed at her housekeeping all day long, she who once had dreamed away an hour broom in hand, and now, in the cool of the afternoon, was carrying a green-grape pie from the morning's baking to Aunt Wealthy.

The old woman hailed her joyfully, knitting in a sheltered corner of her yard. "Set right down an' give me the news o' the day. You've been as skitterin' as a chipmunk lately."

Hallie laughed nervously. "You comfortable, Aunt Wealthy?" She herself had grown thin as a wand, with blue hollows under her eyes; but the eyes themselves burned like flames, and her cheeks were a hot red, as if an inner fire were consuming her body to ashes while her spirit lived on.

"Law, yes," Aunt Wealthy, in her dry chirp. "You tell me what's got ahold o' Dick. I ain't seen him an' you drivin' by this long spell, an' this mornin' he passed with his span, an' who should be a-settin' 'longside, large as dogs, but that Rosette Varrell!"

"She back?" faintly.

"I'll thank you to tell me where she's been! Painted thick as the dust in the road! It beats me what men can see in a piece o' vanity like that!"

Uncle Abijah appeared in the door. "Warn't there a tell 'bout Dick goin' round consid'ble with her 'fore he met up with his wife?" He had mistaken Hallie for one of his granddaughters.

"'Bije, you fetch me some kindlin's real quick!" Aunt Wealthy, with presence of mind, thus removed him. She thrust her pointed little wedge of a face close up to her niece's. "Mark me, Hallie, there ain't a better breed o' men in this commonwealth than the La-Mays; but you mustn't contrary 'em none, dearie—no, you mustn't!"

An acrid odor of burned meat puffed out at Hallie as she hurried into her own garden, and smoke poured from the kitchen. The wood box held the spider clogged with charred bacon, and the wreck of the new coffeepot; at the table, Dick, more "dunderin'" than the

usual sons of men at woman's trade, was eating a cheerless meal of bread and milk. In the exasperation of the thrifty housewife at waste and a mess, the silence of five weeks was close to its end in a vexed cry of: "If you wanted an early supper, couldn't you 'a' told me?" But the queer, blank look on Dick's face, as if she were not there at all, stifled the cry. She began to tidy up the room listlessly, and Dick went out to harness.

His wife was pierced by the sharp reminder of Aunt Wealthy's tale. Could Dick be going to see that woman? She flung the suspicion from her in scorn of her own pettiness. Dick was, indeed, of the best breed of the land; nevertheless, her knees trembled, her lips dried against her teeth.

"I wish I'd never seen grandsire's money!" A passionate cry, and, running to the sitting room, she pulled out of the davenport a smart red purse, a wedding gift, and jerked out of it Than's check, still untouched. She shook the strip of blue paper high in the air. "You wicked money, comin' between a lovin' man an' wife!" She snatched it in her two hands, and tore it into shreds. She watched the wind whisk them up and out of the window.

Suddenly a new anguish gripped her. How could she now win Dick's forgiveness? Deep in her brain had lurked the belief that some day she would go to him with the money in her sorry hands. And now she had broken the key to unlock his heart, the proof of her true repentance. In her simple mind, the check was real coin—once gone, impossible to replace. She sank into a chair, staring dully before her, while the old clock ticked away these wretched minutes in the same even voice that had told the golden hours when she had cooked her first supper for Dick.

The house frightened her by its stillness, as if some one were lying dead in it. She ran out, and in her aimless unhappiness threaded the pastures, thick-set with luscious sun-warmed blackberries, climbed the hill, and sat on a stone, watching the western sky,



Dick LaMay and her brother lifted it out, bound it on the ox sledge, and drew it over, the girl commanding the march like a Napoleon.

Where sloops of purple gently tossed
On seas of daffodil.

She thought the sunset was like a glorious song that she had once heard in a church; and that reminded her of her own poor voice, shut away in the long, smooth box of her throat. She smiled like a grieved child, comforted, when it poured out its rich, sweet flood.

A blazing star swung up the sky, and the rim of the moon, molten red, wheeled above Lyme Hills. The wind shook her light skirts and plucked at her hair. She went on down into the Johnny-cake Road, a lonely trail, having no savor of its lusty name in it. Its isolation, white and silent in the moonlight, wrought wholesomely upon the girl's raw nerves; to whatever reef-ribbed shore her blundering pilotage had steered her little bark of home, it was still *hers*, she would not wander from it.

Up the steep path she started, dismayed at its stairlike slant, when the thud of horses' hoofs sent her crouching behind a rock; no neighbor should tell his womankind he had spied Richard LaMay's wife traipsin' like a

mazed-witted creature in the woods. She heard a woman's laugh, a man's word, and saw, in cruel silhouette against the moonlight, Dick and Rosetta Varrell. She had driven Dick out of her heart to—she dared not think what. She ran like a deer up the road, away from them—anywhere, a world of disorderly fancies plunging through her brain.

She ran till she could barely stand, then walked, then lay down in the wet grass, and panted and shivered, a creature wholly out of herself. With the large-minded love of her sweet, wild nature, she never reproached her husband. Upon herself she heaped all the blame. The exhaustion of her body calmed her spirit. She could not lie out in the woods all night, neither could she go home—ever again; but perhaps she could find some friendly barn.

Her heart swelled with longing for a tender, pitying breast upon which to rest her bewildered head; not her mother's—the feeble Car'line had never thus mothered her children—but her Sister Patience's. Patty would hold her tight, would murmur soothingly against her

cheek; and somehow, as in the storm and stress of childish mischances, would find a way out of this tragic muddle she had made.

Limping and stumbling, she plodded back over the hill, down its rocky path, across her own road, over another hill, and to the edge of "the crik." She loosed Dick's punt, and, steering with an oar, floated on the outgoing tide down to Gilead.

The moon was darkened in clouds when she reached the village, hushed in its first deep sleep. She fumblingly tied the punt to some wharf, and, in a last spurt of energy, started toward the foot of the mansion hill.

The path sprung spongingly under her feet; a wet fog crawled up her skirts, her foot sank in a pool of water. Too tired for caution, she leaped aside, slipped, grasped at the air, and fell into a water chill as if melted out of ice. Tangled in rank weeds, sliding in thick mud, she struggled to her feet, and stood up in water to her shoulders.

When her mind cleared, she knew that she had taken the causeway, a boggy path through the marshes, and fallen into a pool left by a long-disused sawmill, called "the pit." She remembered the pit—dank with foul weeds, green with scum—and turned sick with the thought of it. Then she called to her courage—that famed "Tripp grit"—and reached for some hold, to pull herself out.

A root broke in her hand, a stone rolled into the water, drenching her face with mud. She strove to press her knee into the mud. The bank fell in on her in heavy clods. She tried to scream, but only a hoarse sob beat against the wind.

With every ounce of will she began to stagger back toward the wharf, where she could grasp a solid object. She stumbled against a stone sunken into the water, and fell again down into the sludge. Shuddering at the crawling ooze and the numbing water, exhausted to the point of inanition, she leaned against the treacherous causeway, and knew herself for one already

dead. Her dulling eyes followed the moonpath up to the moon itself, the same moon that shone on Patience, and Felicity, and all the contented, safe people in bed and on Dick.

At that name, a great beat of blood forced life into the chilled courses of her body; her heart lifted in a strong breath. She would not die till she had gasped out to him: "I'm sorry, forgive me!" She plowed on through the water till she could lay hands on the edge of the wharf.

She tried to pry between the boards of the wharf to find a hold for her fingers; she dragged at the iron spikes till her hands were torn; she leaped against the wooden wall till she was battered with bruises. She could not drag her own weight up onto the land. She shrieked till her lungs burned against her chest. Would no one hear? Was she left to die of every living being? Something gleamed in her brain like a keen light. Patty would hear! She called her name, waited, called again, and then, rubbing the water and mud from her face, saw, without surprise, her sister on the wharf above her.

"Hallie," Patience spoke quietly, "catch hold, an' when I pull, you climb." It was the clean, white dress, twisted into a rope. She knelt on the wharf. "Now!"

A struggling, surging upheaval, a strain of arms and back like the breaking of taut cords, and Hallie lay on the wharf.

"Pat, I'm dyin'!" With the words, she fainted.

Patience considered her, in a rush of chaotic ideas. What had cast her sister into this plight? Her own word concerning the heartbroken ancestress who had ended her life in the river stung her. Whatever might have been the impulse in that forlorn young head, low-lying now, she must hide it from the hue and cry of the village; somehow she must get her sister up to bed without arousing even her mother. Hallie had opened her eyes dimly, vacantly. Patience spoke sternly:

"Stand up! Put your arms round my neck! Walk!"

Hallie walked, lurching, staggering, but progressing; and Patience steadied her with arms of tense strength.

"We're over the causeway. We're to the bald rock. We're at the hill path." She counted off each landmark in a bright whisper.

At the hill, with a little sigh, Hallie slipped from her sister's grasp to the ground, her last strength gone.

Women have done it. That night Patience Tripp carried her sister on her back up the hill, across the garden, and into the little, unused kitchen chamber. She dropped Hallie heavily on the bed, and fell herself to the floor, drenched with sweat, trembling in every nerve.

"Thank God!" she prayed, while tears of gratitude cooled her hot eyes; "no one need ever know 'bout this 'cept just we two."

She lay panting till her wrenched muscles found their paths again, and her lungs breathed easily; then she set to work to free Hallie from her wet clothes, to wrap her in hot blankets, and to feed her hot drinks.

The sun flung long streamers of violet, rose, and gold over Lyme Hills; the river changed from blank, mysterious gray to sparkling amethyst; every blade of grass, every leaf of bush flamed with a diamond dewdrop; and the village of Gilead awoke to the day's work. Patience came out of the kitchen, sat down on the doorstep, swung her arms over her head in a long stretch, pushed her flax of hair out of her eyes, smoothed down her muddied dress, and laughed; for that was the way emotion took this, the queerest of all Cap'n Tripp's progeny.

"Than 'lowed if he'd had the raisin' o' us girls, he'd 'a' ca'med us down; 'pon my soul, I wish he had!" She sighed with weariness. "I wish I could give any kind o' a guess at what sort o' didos Dick an' Hallie have been cuttin' up. Poor little Hallie! I guess I'd best pack off Jud to the doctor's, an' I'll get word to Dick, too. My country, there he is now!"

A horse, red-nostriled, foam-flecked, galloped into the yard, and Dick La-

May, hatless, in his shirt sleeves, leaped down beside her.

"You seen my wife?"

"In there."

"Is she—is she——" His lips worked helplessly over the dread word.

"Land, no, Dick," easily; "but she's put in an awful night."

LaMay sank down upon the doorstep, and buried his face in his arms, his wiry body shaking with the passion he could not hide.

Nothing of all this wild night's work was stranger than this—her quizzical, assured brother-in-law so wrought from his humorous ease. The girl, her own face tear wet, laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Don't, Dick," she soothed, her voice maternal with helpfulness. "Hallie's brought pretty low now, but she'll be all made over new when she's had a good sleep—an' seen you."

"Where she been last night?" huskily.

"In sawmill pit, strugglin' for hours."

The man lifted his face, hot with tears. "My little Hallie in the pit!" in a terrible voice.

"Hush; she's asleep!"

"How she come there?"

"I ain't rightly sure o' anythin', Dick, she's so kind o' wander-witted, poor dear. Keeps a-sayin' how she loves you, an' is sorry, an' doesn't want a piano."

"Piano!" The word was like an oath. "She sure shall have the hand-somest one in this State, an' play it all day, an' Sunday, too." His voice broke again.

"There, there," still mothering him. "How you know 'bout this business, anyhow?"

"I was out drivin' kind o' late last night——"

"With Rosetta Varrel?" Her memory held all Hallie's wanderings.

"Her?" The man stared dazedly at her. The last hour had swung him through a circle of anguish so great that the affairs of the night before were all a blurred past. "You listen, Patience: I used to go round with her some, 'fore I knew Hallie—she was a very different

fashion o' girl then—an' yesterday mornin' I met her, first time in years, luggin' a great basket down to Gilead. I gave her a lift, same as any decent man would."

"Drivin' in the moonlight she saw you, too." She smiled shrewdly at him, but with no unkindness; it took much to shock her kindly tolerance.

The man's face flushed scarlet. "That's between me an' my wife," he began stiffly; then, in a more humble realization of his dependence upon her: "She said she was sick an' friendless, an' hard pushed for money, an'—well, I helped her some." He watched his sister-in-law's face to see how she took it, and as she appeared in no sense distressed he went on more boldly: "I'd 'a' tol' Hallie all about it, an' asked Rosetty up to my own house, but we've had a kind o' fallin' out—"

"I know 'bout that, too."

"I wouldn't go to her house, so I took her a-drivin', while I listened to her affairs."

Patience smiled wisely. "Hal always was a fly-up-the-crik."

"When I got back, the house was all dark, so I deemed my wife had gone to bed. This mornin' at daylight Ben Ely routed me up. He'd been night fishin' down the river, an' found my boat floatin' empty, but carryin' a woman's hat an' purse. They belonged to Hallie. When I found she hadn't slept home, I——" He shut his lips together hard, and turned his face from her.

"She can't see you, Dick, yet a while; but you stay here to breakfast."

"How she get out o' the pit?"

"I pulled her out," briefly.

Bewilderment filled his voice. "How in the Lord's name did you guess she was there?"

"Heard her call my name. Hallie an' me, we're closer'n what most sisters are—we *feel* things about each other, 'way cross miles o' separation." Her voice vibrated with the awe of the Power that had touched with its mighty finger the quick of that mystery within every soul, causing her to see and hear things without form or sound.

Hallie woke delirious, and must see no one, the doctor said, except Patience, to whom she clung with her poor lost wits. All day Patience swung between the kitchen chamber and the post office, the latter besieged by most of Gilead's citizens, avid, it would seem, for mail.

"I should think the folks in this town never saw a post office till to-day, an' never expected to have 'nother opportunity to see one," snapped the postmaster, as she banged her office door shut, and cast herself, a limp creature, on the foreroom lounge.

"You're all flaxed out, poor child!" mourned Car'line; then, because she was made that way, reproachfully: "Don't you rub your heels again' that lounge, daughter; you'll mar it, an' you know every stitch o' furniture in this house belongs to Nathaniel. I ain't got anythin' but a life use o' it."

Patience drummed her feet against the fine carving. "If Than Brooks wants his things where moth an' rust do not corrupt, he'd better wrap 'em up in cotton wool," with the acrimony of extreme weariness.

She was sorry next minute, for Than himself walked in, looking tired and sober, and in a queer, indefinable way older. Amid the rush of the stream of quick living that day she had found time to talk to Felicity, and to wring from her a letter to her lover, in which, under delicately vague phrasing, lurked the bitter truth. The man did not show that he had heard her, saying in his blunt way:

"What's this 'bout Hallie fallin' in sawmill pit?"

"I guessed it wasn't her a-callin', after all." Patience had run into the kitchen, there, to the pursuing Than, in a rapid whisper:

"Mother ain't to be told, but she an' Dick had a flare-up, an'——"

"What over?"

"How can I tell? An' she started to come over here at midnight——"

"What did she expect to make by that?"

"To see me—an' lost her way, an' fell in, an' I heard her call, an'——"

"You couldn't; it's too far."

"But I did. An' I pulled her out, an' she——"

"You ain't strong 'nough."

"Carried her up the hill here."

"That ain't possible to a woman o' your size."

This time no lightning flashed back at him, for Patience, wavering vaguely, slid down upon a kitchen chair, and her head fell forward upon the table.

"I guess I'm kind o' sleepy," she murmured uncertainly, defiant to the last.

Than picked her up in his arms, carried her up the stairs to her room, laid her on her bed, unlaced her slender shoes, and covered her with a quilt, all with the serious simplicity of one who does his plain duty. "You stay there till to-morrow mornin'. Things'll get 'long good 'nough; you ain't contracted to carry the whole world, as I know of."

The girl buried her cheek in the pillow, asleep before he had left the room.

"You say she's asleep, an' I can't see her till noon. Great king, Pat, how long you goin' to keep a man from his own wife?" Dick LaMay threatened her from the path.

"Doctor says she's a-doin' more'n he could ask, improvin' as she is," Patience, rather small and "peaked," assured him, seated meekly on the doorstep, her favorite airing. "To-morrow you can take her home."

It was the third day after Hallie's adventure, and Dick, in his patrol between his wife and his "critturs," had not yet been able to see the former. Patience gathered a grape leaf, and crumpled it in her fingers sedulously.

"You ain't goin' to be stern with her, Dick," she ventured softly. "Hallie's tryin', I know, but she's *sweet*, too, an' if you could hear her talk 'bout you—my, I guess you're her religion!"

The shrewd farmer stood like a schoolboy caught in a guilty act.

"The blame's all on my side, Patty; I acted like a mean fool to her, an' then I was too ugly to own up. She wanted a piano to play her little tunes on, an' I wouldn't let her have it. I wish I could

have one awaitin' in the sittin' room for her when I carry her home."

"Maybe you'll be situated so you can buy one by an' by," hopefully.

"I want it now," poor Hallie's own words. "If she could see it there, all complete, she'd make sure my repentance was thorough. I got the money, too, from a timber piece I sold unexpected at a good high figure; but there ain't an instrument for sale nearer'n Hartford."

"An' that handsome one o' grand-sire's eatin' its head off in our fore-room, an' not a soul to play a note on it," mourned the girl.

Dick went on grievously: "I treated her like a dog, an' now just to smooth it down with a few easy words—talk's cheap! I'd pay double if I could say 'Little girl, here's your piano! I give it to you of my free heart.'"

Patience's eyes began to dance; all her freakish humor, locked up in responsibility for days, sprang out, and pirouetted, as it were, before him.

"Take ours! You hush up! We can do it easy. Slip the legs off—I saw how when the men moved it, the time the floor got weak, an' grandsire had a new one laid; then we'll load it on to the stoneboat, an' Buck an' Bright will haul it over."

"It ain't yours to give away so antic. Your mother don't own the furniture here."

"I guess I heard the will same as you. It's Than's. Well, we won't say a word to him, an' when the piano's 'stablished over to your house, I'll guarantee to see there won't be any bloodshed."

"You're crazy!" pithily.

"Crazier'n a loon!" Patience's face crinkled with wild mischief. "Sabbath mornin', all the folks to church—couldn't be a prettier time."

"I never heard o' such works!"

"Neither did King George when we kicked up a revolution again' him. Oh, come along! Think o' what Hallie'll feel when she sees her very own dear little piano smilin' an' bowin' in her home!" The girl was up on prancing feet. "There's Jud—he ain't to meet—



"I wrote the check myself. I signed 'Nathaniel Brooks' to it myself. I was goin' to tell him, but I didn't have a chance."

in'; he'll help. It's a real little light one to heft." She danced before him toward the house. "Come on! Come on!"

Even as the daughter of Herodias danced to more terrible ends, so Patience Tripp, impassioned of a "whimsy" after old Cap'n Tripp's very heart, tripped Nathaniel Brooks' own lawful piano out of his own lawful house, along the back road to the lonely farm, and safe into Hallie LaMay's sitting room. Dick LaMay and her Brother Judson, in a trance of obedience, lifted it out, bound it on the ox sledge, and drew it over, the girl commanding the march like a Napoleon.

"Come back this afternoon, an' she'll see you." She waved good-by from the top of the hill. "Lucky Parson Card preaches his good full hour an' a half. They'll be hid in the lane 'fore meetin' lets out."

Hallie had awakened, very still and peaceful, like a river that has dashed against its bounds in foam and thunder, but now washes the stones in lips of

sound. She looked like the angel of herself, all willfulness and passion burned away, only pure sweetness left.

"You pretty little dearie!" Patience kissed her as she might a tiny baby. "Who you think's been hangin' round this house night an' day, pesterin' me to be let see you?"

Hallie's eyes filled with light. "Oh, Patty, I was cruel to him! I never said one word to him for five weeks!"

"I suppose lie was talkin' to you all the time," dryly. "He's comin' back soon." She bubbled out in a trickle of laughter at the picture of Dick, stalking solemnly beside the piano.

"You think he'll forgive me?" piteously.

"Oh, lands, yes!"

"I've done worse things," fearfully. "I tore up the money."

"What money?"

"That grandsire lef' me, the three hundred dollars. Dick wanted to use it 'stead of mortgagin', an' I wouldn't, an' then I was so miserable I couldn't bear to see it, so I just snatched it into bits."

Patience laughed, kneeling by the bed, her arms around her sister.

"You little ninkum, you!"

"An' I want it now to put in his hand an' tell him to buy him the land an' have his cows, an' I don't care one least dight for a piano, ever, just for him to prize me like he used, an' to call me 'sister,' an' 'little trick,' an' that."

Patience moved about the room restlessly; her thoughts might have been set to the words:

I cannot tell what this love may be
That cometh to all, but not to me,

but she recognized it as "fierce to destroy, mighty to save."

"If I could just give him that money! Oh, Dick, Dick, I was goin' to truly, an' now I never can!"

The other girl freed her brain of the cobweb of her dream. "Why, goosie, Than will write you another. A check's just paper; you haven't lost any money."

"Oh, could I pay the mortgage, an' give him the receipt? I'd love to do that! Could I? Could I?" She was trembling with desire.

"Why, of course, in a week or so, when you're well 'nough to go down to Pettipaug."

"Could I now? I'm well, I'm strong. Then when Dick comes, he can't say he won't take my money, for it'll all be paid an' done." She sat up in bed, red spots burning in each cheek, tears of excitement starting to her eyes, a sick child that must be indulged. Patience caught fire immediately.

"You shall have it! I'll find a way."

"Could you get another from him?" timidly.

"That's what I'll do." She pondered—a girlish, freakish committee of high finance.

"You see, Felicity an' I, we both o' us loaned ours to mother to invest in some bonds Than found for her goin' cheap."

"Bonds?" in the greatest wonder.

"Now, after I get him to write you 'nother, how'll I fix the thin' up? This day's the Sabbath, an' all week-day time I'll be screwed to that ol' office!" She talked to herself rather than to the sick

girl, who watched through the open window, with eyes all a-dream, a pale yellow butterfly flutter over a great scarlet poppy.

"It's worth tryin', anyhow," in quick triumph.

"You spent your money, dear?" more vague than ever.

"No, no! I'm goin' down to Judge Lamden's. It ain't legal, an' it ain't Sabbatical, but I'll wager my wig he'll fix it up for me."

"What you see him for?"

"Well, one reason's 'cause he's president o' the bank, an' 'nother's, he's my godfather. If he don't owe me a pretty favor, now an' then, for tyin' such apilations onto me on christenin' day, my name ain't P. A. T.! You be a goody-nicey girl!" She was off.

Nathaniel's mother was herself just back from meeting.

"Mornin', Aunt Clirindy. Where's Than?"

"Gone up State." Mrs. Brooks was rather a "tejus body" for converse.

"Forever! What for?"

"Stock."

"When he be back?"

"Can't say." She drove her old horse into the barn, and began to unharness him.

The girl stood still, her slender height, in its white dress, delicately clear against the green of the lilac bushes; then absently, she strolled into the Brooks' sitting room. She seated herself, her eyes moodily fixed upon the old davenport in which Nathaniel kept his papers. He must have gone off in a hurry, she speculated, for the account books and other papers were in some disorder.

"Just a slip o' paper an' a scratch o' the pen!" she sighed dolefully.

She followed her thought to the desk and wrote, in a bold hand: "Nathaniel E. Brooks."

"Regular copy-cat!" she laughed. "We were both taught writin' to school by the same master."

She pulled out one of the absent owner's account books, and laboriously copied the name written there.

"He couldn't tell it for any different himself."

Suddenly her eyes glinted; she laughed exultantly, as always when in mischief.

"It's the same as Hallie's check she tore up!" She seized Nathaniel's check book, wrote a check for three hundred dollars payable to herself, signed it with Than's name, copied it with a nice exactitude, indorsed it with her own name, and slipped out of the house before Mrs. Brooks entered it.

The matter of the note held by the bank against Richard LaMay was settled without much difficulty. The judge was shaken at the unseemly day, but he respected the responsible postmistress, and he delighted in the amusing god-child. With admonishments and reproofs, he nevertheless opened the bank—an easy affair sixty years ago—received the check, dated for the next day, and gave her the canceled note.

Hallie clasped this sign of her loving submission in a trance of happiness that paid no heed to her sister's explanations. Whatever pangs of astute business may have pierced that sister's innocent heart at the method, the result was so altogether good that they were healed when Patience stood beside Hallie's bed.

The church bell was ringing for Sabbath sundown; the birds trilled in little, low-voiced notes; the sunshine slanted in long, mellow beams across the fields of wheat and rye, ripening richly to harvest. Dick LaMay, entering the mansion with a great bunch of sweet peas in his hand, wondered if heaven could be more lovely than this summer Sunday, or he himself more at peace there. He went quietly through the kitchen into the low-raftered room where, on her narrow bed, Hallie lay waiting for him.

She turned to him the soft wonder of her beauty, her eyes flooded with light; and the man, with a queer sound that was not a laugh, flung himself on his knees by the bed, gathering her into his arms, the sweet peas falling in pink and perfumed showers over her.

"Hallie!" His lips against her cheek.

"Dick!" The soft night of her hair covered him.

That was all; not a word of piano or of money, yet each understood.

Patience slipped away out by the kitchen; she would not hear one word of that sacred reconciliation.

"An' so they were married an' lived happy ever after—when they had flaxed through their hurrah-boys, fire-in-the-mountain fallin' out." She laughed a little, and wandered into the thin stretch of woods behind the house—cool, fern-carpeted, and dimly sweet. There two young lovers, hand in hand, smiled on her with childlike simplicity.

"It's Austen, Patty," Felicity murmured. "It's my sister, Patience, the one that sort o' manages us all."

"You need a sight o' management, too." Patty held out a friendly hand to the stranger.

Austen took the slim, brown hand, and kissed it. "The good, good sister, who saved my little Felicity for me!" His foreign accent was warmly deep.

"You treat her pretty, my dear Philly!" Patience's voice was unsteady.

At that, straightway he kissed her cheek. "I love her!" he cried. At those words, which no repetition can commonize, Patience blushed a hot rose, drew her hand away sharply, and, with a queer little inconsequent excuse, ran from them back to her own yard and to the angle in the stone wall, where she could look straight down into the blue river.

Twilight was drawing in—mystic, vague; all the world was trembling with the soft pulsations of love, save only her little niche of it, which was arid, dull, dumb. Her young heart ached with longings for uncomprehended beauties; her soul was ever athirst. No man could look at her as Dick had looked at Hallie, or that pretty boy at little Felicity. Every Gilead lad had been at some time her gallant play boy, but no man had offered her his strength for a life staff. Felicity was a sweet and delicate wild rose; Hallie a burning Jacqueminot; she? a bramble, a sharpset briar! What man would wear her in his bosom?

"This your favorite seat?"

Because she was tired, she started, and cried out; because she was sad, she answered gayly:

"Good evenin', Lyman. There's room for you."

Young Gillette placed himself beside her. "I saw your mother to meetin' this mornin', an' she gave me an invitation to supper." He was very self-conscious.

Patience flushed a little. In that long ago in Pettipaug region, only relations and a young woman's "intended" were bidden to Sunday-night supper.

"I venture to guess mother forgot how down to prison fare we've got. We've had sickness in the house, an' the Saturday bakin' was kind o' left to itself." She laughed, to bridge any embarrassment.

"I didn't come for my supper. I come to see you." He blurted it out.

"Well, here I am!" She turned on him suddenly all her elfish charm, her queer witchery.

He was not proof against this; he blushed, stammered, and lost his pretty assurance. Patience considered him in kindly wise; for two years, she and the young mail clerk had held a romantic commerce of notes, flowers, and other tokens, all through the mail bag, without either having seen the other. Then by chance they had met at Pettipaug station, been more than ever pleased with each other, and here they were to-night. Lyman was a personable lad, very neat and trig, with an offish voice and a smile that moved like a woman's. "Easy dispositioned," Patience had marked him. "Dreadful good company," said his mates. "Of an honest capability," spoke his employment in a difficult task.

"Don't hector me, Patience!" pleaded the young suitor. "I came 'way over from Pettipaug just to see you."

"Three whole long miles!" she teased.

"I—I've been trying to have a tell with you as much as a month." Now that his opportunity was upon him he could not use it.

Patience's breath came unevenly; her brown cheeks were rosy; she wanted to laugh and to cry. No girl, at twenty-two, can wait for a man's avowal of love in tranquillity.

"You an' me, we're pretty well 'quainted, if we haven't seen each other so awful many times."

"Why, yes, Lyman; I deem we'd be called acquainted." The laughter conquered, her face was all dimpled with it.

"There's folks in Pettipaug could find consid'ble worthy things to say o' me." He tried another opening.

"You fear I don't esteem you, Lyman?" she flaunted him.

The boy, stung to courage, caught her hands in his: "Patience, dear, you know how 'tis with me—I didn't think to wed an' settle down to responsibility yet. I'm consid'ble young, but when I see you——" It was all awkward, egotistic, yet redeemed from pettiness by the genuine emotion that ran, a thread of gold, in and out of the dull words.

Patience ceased to laugh, ceased to regard him with her changeling gray eyes that wooed his glance, but would never let him win hers. She looked away across the river, her slim figure leaned a little toward him. He put his arm around her shoulder; and at the contact with her soft, warm body, his heart tugged at its moorings in a great leap of passion.

"Patty, dear, dear girl, my sweet-heart"—names of love came shyly to his young, crude affection—"you set by me—like I do you? We'll make a match o' it. I never saw a girl I felt to like I do to you—you're different. I guess we're kind o' made special for each other. You say somethin', can't you, dear? You tell me 'tis so with you, too."

"Yes." She felt his arms close round her, and, turning, she hid her head against his shoulder, bending to do it, for she was the taller.

"There! There!" He stroked her hair from her face till he found her cheek to kiss; abruptly, like a boy, yet like a passionate boy, too. He raised her head and kissed her lips, and at that

soft, pure touch, his boyish soul was reached, he said with awe:

"I'll be good to you, dear! I pledge my honor to you for it."

His gravity passed; he began to tease her, and to tell her his plans, his raise in salary, the excellent house he had heired from his uncle. The girl listened, helping with a word or a question now and then, but silent chiefly, her hand in his, her eyes walking the moon track on the river. Her mother's voice called supper.

"Lyman, you let it be between just us?" she whispered. "Not even my folks or yours to know."

Gillette hesitated; he wanted to tell his father and mother, who already knew his desires.

"Promise!" Her foot tapped the grass.

He was "easy dispositioned." "If it's the way you like it best," he yielded, hurt in this first hour of his betrothal.

She began at once to make up for his disappointment by pretty wiles which she, better than any girl, knew; so that the young lover went home keen with delight in all the world; in his heart, high resolves of kindness to all men; his sweetheart's kiss, cool, and delicately trembling as the moonlight, like a sacramental blessing on his forehead.

Patience went to bed candleless, brushed her hair in the moon rays, told herself earnestly: "I am a happy girl, an' there's everythin' in Lyman that I want in a man I wed. He's upright an' he's likely, an' he's one well thought of by every one. I am a happy girl, an' an honored one, too." She knelt down by the bed to say her prayers. "An' the reason I don't feel like Phil or Hal," her thoughts began again as soon as she said "amen," "is because I ain't all made out o' dew an' moonshine an' noonday sunfire. I'm pretty much earth, I guess." She crept into bed, where, oddly, her last thought was not of the lover who had won her, but of Nathaniel Brooks, whose piano she had stolen.

"If there ain't the ol' farrago to pay when he gets back!" She drifted off to sleep.

It was Wednesday before Than returned, and "the old farrago" did indeed descend upon her without time to arm for battle. Than marched out upon her as she was picking early apples in the orchard after office hours, and saluted her:

"What you mean by givin' 'way my piano?" His voice was menacing.

"Who told you?" to gain time.

"Mother. Aunt Carline said I gave you my permission."

"I never told her that!" The girl was as brave as a soldier. "Dick didn't want to move it over to his place. He said it wasn't mine to lend—I ain't given it to anybody—an' you'd be in a takin', an' I—I guess I mesmerized him!" She laughed out mockingly, her eyes mischief wild.

"I deem you know 'tis stealin'."

"Oh, Than Brooks, who ever heard o' stealin' a piano! You might as well steal a meetin' house!" She would not take him seriously.

The man picked up an apple, and threw it smashingly against the fence. "You mix yourself up in my affairs too much," he said sullenly.

Patience reddened furiously. "That piano was no manner o' good to any o' us—we can't play the tune the ol' cow died to on it. Hallie ain't goin' to hurt it one little dight, an' by an' by, when Dick gets more forehanded, he'll buy her one o' her own, an' then she'll send yours back."

"That piano has stood in that corner o' the mansion forerom since the day Great-grandsire Brooks brought it in the hold o' his ship clear from Paris." Each word with pounding emphasis.

"Time it moved, then," she giped at him. "I should think you'd be pleased to have little Hallie happy, with it, drawing music out o' it every hour in the day."

"I should be," unexpectedly, "if I'd been asked first."

"There weren't time. Dick an' Hallie had had high words over a piano—she bound to get it an' he set not to—an' Hallie had 'most died, an' he wanted to have the instrument right there waitin' for her to show he was sorry with all

his whole soul, an' to make her happy. An' I wanted to make my little sister happy, too." She flung it at him defiantly.

He looked at her strangely. "You sisters set by each other mor'n most." She could not tell if he spoke in irony.

He turned away abruptly, striding toward the house.

"Wait!" she called him. "I got something else to tell you."

"Can't," over his shoulder, his long swing carrying him over great swarths of ground. "I got to see a man in Saybrook 'bout a land deal to-night, an' I may have to get the train clear to Boston."

"It won't take a minute." She ran after him, apples dropping from her apron at every step. He marched on, unregarding. She gave over the chase, murmuring a little anxiously:

"Oh, well, there's no harm in waitin'. I'll tell him soon as ever he's back."

Nathaniel did make the momentous journey to Boston, an affair of a whole week. In that week such changes passed over Patience's life that it was as if she had been swept from summer's warmth to the bitter days of December.

One afternoon, at exactly five o'clock, a decorous carryall containing three men drove to her mother's door, and to her welcome the men asked if they might see her alone. Patience, a little cold in her finger tips, very straight in the carriage of her head, faced them in the foreroom.

"It's a serious matter we wish to bring before your notice," Deacon Alonzo Cooper began, in a heavy voice. Patience thought him the dullest man she had ever encountered, but Petipaugh township esteemed him for great wisdom, and he was a trustee of the bank. "You ever met with that afore?"

Slowly, as if executing a rite, he drew out his wallet, opened it, and unfolded a piece of paper, the check for three hundred dollars.

"Why, yes, it's got my name on it." She thought how calm an innocent girl should look, and straightway reddened guiltily, and trembled in her knees.

"Did you write your name on the

back yourself?" This was the new cashier, a ferret-faced young man, a stranger from "Lyme way."

"Why, yes," again. "I gave it to Judge Lamden, my godfather."

"Judge, he's sick abed or he'd a-come. He took the check in all good part." This the third member, little, weak-voiced Cap'n Jonas Brogdon, also a trustee.

"You paid a note for Richard LaMay, livin' on the Book Hill Road?" labored on the ponderous deacon.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you deem this check a proper one?" His little, dull eyes fixed her.

"Proper? You mean Than—Nathaniel ain't got that much money?" Here was a confusion! How could that be, when her check merely took the place of the one Hallie had destroyed?

"You received it from Nathaniel Brooks' own hands?" the sharp-set cashier leaped at her.

Patience flung him such a look as her sailor grandfather might have used to threat a mutinous hand.

"Ain't he got the money?" she repeated.

"We had no suspicion of that check," the slow spokesman continued, "till a week ago, when a check came in to the account o' Nathaniel Brooks. 'Twas made out to Harriet Tripp LaMay, her that is wife to Richard LaMay, an' was for three hundred dollars."

"Oh!" Patience's wits snatched at the end of the knot. Hallie had not understood, had not even heard probably, what her sister had done for her—had believed she had borrowed Patience's own money, had told Dick of the destruction of her own check; Dick had met Than, had explained to him, and Than had written a new one for her. Horrible coil!

"The honorin' o' this check to Harriet Tripp LaMay caused the account o' Nathaniel Brooks to be overdrawn two hundred an' four dollars, eight cents." Deacon Cooper's voice sounded like the judge at assizes.

"Notified Brooks, in Boston." The cashier's words were as rapid as his senior's were delayed. "Replied: 'Im-

possible!" Sent itemized list o' checks for the last year. This one not included."

"There was one o' June tenth, payable to Patience Abigail Tripp, indorsed by her, an' drawn on the bank."

"Her?" vaguely; in this thicket of legalities, she began to lose her own identity.

"Said check was on the itemized list sent from Boston by Nathaniel Brooks," Deacon Cooper announced portentously.

All three men looked at the girl in silence; the deacon dully, Cap'n Jonas in dim pity, the cashier, Pollard, like a detective.

"You received this check from Brooks' own hands?" The cashier hung to that point bulldogishly.

Patience's eyes leaped from one face to the other, seeking aid, refuge. What an insensate act! What a fool!

"As trustees o' the bank, we're obligated to take measures to protect our patrons." Cap'n Jones was apologetic.

"An' as one o' your bondsmen in the post office, I got an extry interest," old Cooper's sledge-hammer utterance.

The girl's brain had come to life, with all its quick-beating powers. She must in no way involve Hallie and Dick; the latter would never forgive the turning out on the green of his intimate matters, and by some obscure masculine process of reasoning would blame poor little Hallie. Anyhow, no side issues changed the bald, crude fact of the check.

"Signin' another person's name in business is forgery, an', as such, is a State's prison offense." By way of encouragement from the old deacon.

She faced them all at last, their hard suspicions gathered up into one hostile shaft by the compulsion of her eyes, swept of all their mysterious shadows, crystal clear now.

"I wrote the check myself. I signed 'Nathaniel Brooks' to it myself." She spoke with entire steadiness. "I was goin' to tell him, but I didn't have a chance."

The three men stared, astonished; not at the confession—two of them, at least, had come to wring it from her—

but at the manner of it. Old Cooper, founded on the rock of his self-esteem, and the smart young cashier were at a loss; it was little, feeble Cap'n Jonas who found his wits first.

"You deem 'twas proper conduct on your part, Patience?"

"I'm goin' to pay him right away. I got three hundred dollars o' my own, only I couldn't lay my hands on it just then," she answered instantly. "Than Brooks is just like my own brother." And as she said this she felt in a keen breath that never before had he seemed so much a stranger to her.

The old deacon had reestablished his grip upon his thunderbolts. "Such works ain't honest, an' ye ain't an honest woman!" he plunged at her.

"I'm terr'ble sorry I was such a foolish one." She fronted him with outrageous boldness. "I am honest. Than'll see it so when he comes to hear the rights o' it."

"It's a State's prison offense," repeated the deacon, a heavy machine that, once started, could not be stopped till it had run down.

"You can't put me there without Than's willin' to help you." This was a bow at a venture that hit the clout.

"That's true, an' of course Brooks won't prosecute one o' his own family," agreed the cashier. "But if I was him I'd have a kind o' business *talk* with you."

"Ol' squire would 'a' prosecuted ye, if ye be his own granddaughter," ground out the deacon.

Patience flashed him a look in which one glimpsed a spiritual, if not a blood, kinship to the fierce old squire.

"We shan't take action o' this till Nathaniel Brooks is to home again," the deacon said. As at a signal, they all rose.

"This is all goin' to be kep' private among us here," mild old Cap'n Jonas ventured, with a timid glance at his partners.

The girl faced them, head high, cheeks flushed, eyes of steel—a true portrait of a "brazen hussy." "I'm distressed for all the trouble you've been put to, gentlemen." Her voice ran with-

out a quiver. "An' I tell you all, right out, 'twas the most foolish, unbusiness-like thing I ever did, an' I'm sorry for that. But it wasn't *wrong*—not as I did it."

"We shan't take action yet." Threat sounded in the old deacon's voice. "But if Than's got the blood into him I believe he has"—he hung on the words—"he won't sit mum under such scandalous treatment o' his legal rights."

He thumped out of the room with no further adieu, his iron-shod cane clanging on the steps like the door of a jail. The others bowed, the cashier repeating Cap'n Jonas' words:

"This will be kept private."

Outside, this last exclaimed involuntarily: "Great Scotland, what grit that girl has!"

"Ought to be whipped!" snorted the deacon. "Wilder'n hawks, the whole passel o' them Tripp children!"

Patience stood at the window, watching her enemies drive away, her slender body quivering like a race horse at the goal, her hands tight clenched; had any one crossed her at that moment, she would have smitten him even to killing.

"When is Than a-comin' back?" At that, her knees shook beneath her, and she dropped limp into a chair.

Cap'n Jonas had assured Patience of the secrecy of the investigation, but she guessed at once it was through him that the trickle of gossip leaked out. The cap'n was wedded to a masterful woman, one of "the sot Treadways," who also heired on the Daggett side a fear-some joy in "a dish o' talk." In a week, Gilead, the Book Hill Road, all Pettipaug township, was astir over "some kind o' a crooked trade brewed up by Patience Tripp."

Versions differed. Pettipaug, near the fount of information, said it was "bad works o' some fashion over a check in the post office." Gilead, loyal to the office, if not to the official, retorted: "'Twas money took out o' the Brooks estate unlawfully." Book Hill, on the frontiers of civilization, put forth a picturesque account of Patience climbing into Nathaniel Brooks' house

by night, and rummaging out some paper of vast influence on his property and hers; unclassified rumor contented itself with "mixin' up accounts," "kind o' light-fingered with money."

Patience heard them all, and conceived of her own brain twenty more. She suffered every hour of the day, and half the long night; suffered horribly. She had known herself counted, heretofore, in the eyes of her world, as freakish, queer, and wild, but straight as a plummet. She had never dreamed how precious her honor was to her because she had never conceived it stained. To her self-respect, throbbing like a festered wound, the air was full of hard eyes, of cruel voices. Time, the all-healer, did not belong in her pharmacopœia, this girl to whom life was just a raw, burning now.

"'It was mine own familiar friend that lifted up his heel against me.'" Patience smiled with tortured humor when her mother read that aloud at morning prayers. All forsook her. Her mother, shedding streams of weak tears, implored her to confess till the poor girl was weary of the face of her own parent. Hobart, the shiftless, good-tempered brother, reproved her like the prophet of old, warning Nineveh. Richard LaMay reasoned upon faith, righteousness, and judgment. Felicity was away, and Hallie still too frail from her adventures to be troubled with ill news. Patience defied them all, with a hard courage crystallized into one answer: "I will not talk about it; think what you please." If they had been loyal! But explain to doubting love!

Then, upon a moonless night, dark with soft clouds, in which, at long spaces, a flashing star burned through, came Lyman Gillette, very earnest, very grave, very determined to know the truth.

They sat together in the crotch of the wall, where a fortnight before they had pledged, each to each, faithful love; Patience's white shawl a spot of light in the blackness, their voices queerly distinct in the night's silence.

"What's this I've heard about you, Patty?" The young fellow did not

mean to speak like a school-master, but he could not help remembering the rumors of her stubborn secretiveness. "It don't sound a pretty story."

She answered him instantly, her courage up with a leap. "I behaved like a three-times-over little fool, Lyman, an' I got three hundred dollars that wasn't mine; but I'll——"

"Three hundred—— My king!"

"I am as honest as you. I wouldn't take one penny that don't belong to me."

"Could you prove that in court?"

"I can, in the court o' God!" passionately.

He thought her merely irreverent, and countered cheaply, to meet her:

"I guess the case ain't goin' to be tried there."

"It is! An' I'm pronounced innocent."

"Don't be silly," coldly. "I got a right to know the truth. I'm a-goin' to be your husband, an' responsible for you."

"You ain't yet!" And, somehow, she was glad that she could say it. Then gently: "I've got your word o' honor never to tell a soul?"

"I promise."

She gave him the foolish, reckless little story of Hallie's need, the lost check, her determination to get the money for her sick sister, and her forgery. She hated it all as she told it. Gillette listened in an excitement that constantly interrupted. At the end he burst out:

"You forged Than Brooks' name for three hundred dollars?"

"I told you."

"You are an unprincipled woman!" his excitement hurling him out of all self-control.

Patience recoiled. "No!" like a mis-sile.

"Don't you sense anythin'? Haven't



Than knelt on the floor beside her, his lantern held in one hand.

you heard o' the Commandments?" still with passion.

Patience reached for his hand in the darkness. She was not angry at all; he seemed to her a dull-witted child, to whom she must explain an intricate sum. "Don't you see? I was goin' to tell Than, an' give him back the money."

"You say so *now*—when you're found out. Why didn't you give it to him the next day? Explain that!"

"If I'd 'a' wanted to be a thief, would I have gone to work so clumsily? It was bound to come out at the end o' the year, when his account was balanced."

Her reasonableness was another proof of her guilt.

"You think he'll view it same as you do?"

The cold fear that for days had lapped her feet whelmed her now, as often in the dead night. Would Than understand? And if he failed to! There was iron in him—the Brooks vein—and a sense of duty to the law that would outcount the claim of heart and blood.

"If he don't prosecute he ain't ol' squire's grandson!" He answered his own question.

"Not in his own family!" she flung back.

"Come, Patience, let me tell just him! I got to. I can't have a wife that maybe was jailed for——"

"There ain't the least fear, Lyman," with sad tranquillity. "I ain't ever goin' to wed you."

"Why not?" His anger flared again. "We ain't suited to each other; we'd be dreadful quarrelsome an' unhappy."

"Who you think would be suited to you ever, you goin' on like this?"

"Nobody." Her words sounded a melancholy cadence on the still night air.

"You listen to me, Patty. I want to wed you. I own right here an' now, my faith in you has got a dreadful blow, an' I can't feel like I did to you—not for a good while, anyhow—but I do prize you, I do want you!" His voice strove for sincerity; with all his manhood, he sought to act like a man.

"When I come out o' Haddan Jail?" grimly; then, with an appealing softness: "It ain't you, Lyman; it's me. I acted hasty the other night, an' now I can't go through with it. We're queer, we Tripp girls."

"Your sister jilted Brooks," he answered, as if finding comfort there.

"Yes—we've got our notions, an' we follow 'em out. I'm 'shamed I've hurt you so, Lyman, for you're a good man, an' honorable, an' I want you to try to think kindly o' me—for—I—ain't bad." The words came with difficulty, but she said them all.

He stood up resolutely. "Maybe you'll think different to-morrow."

"I ain't angry. I wish you well." Her voice had a sorrowful finality.

"I hold myself ready to stand to every word I said—that night."

"I wish you well, Lyman."

"Oh, Patty! Curse that money! I did prize you so!" He strode away into the night, the bushes cracking as he thrashed through them.

Patience leaned back against the tree that shaded the fence. She felt sore, and lame, and crippled, and tired, with unyouthful lassitude, of the whole, dreary, somber game of life, where neither courage, nor generosity, nor love itself, availed anything.

The sun hot on her face woke her next morning from a tossing night's sleep. By that she knew herself late in rising, and flew downstairs.

"There's Than!" She stopped at the kitchen door, her eyes on a figure in the road.

"He came home last night," her mother answered mournfully, from the stove.

The girl stood still as a stone. For once she had no courage. Her very life hung on Than's decision. She had vouched gallantly for his family feeling in bearing her out now, but could she count on that in a Brooks? And what was she to him? The sister of the girl who had jilted him!

"You goin' to boil the coffee, daughter?" her mother's voice broke her trance.

She walked out of the door, then ran as if she were running from, and not into, danger.

"Than!" A small sound, but he heard and waited.

The two weeks in which he had endured his loss of Felicity had wrought like years in his face; "time counts by heart throbs, not by figures on a dial." The soft sulkiness of boyhood had been ground away into a hard power by the inner setting of life to endurance and forgetfulness.

"I forged your name to a check, three hundred dollars!" A soldier in the last charge, with every drop of courage hurling her headlong to it.

Than remained calm, after his wont. "I got a kind o' story o' it last night in

the stage. Let's hear the rights o' it now." He motioned her to a seat on a flat stone by the roadside, and deliberately seated himself beside her, his yoke of oxen left to graze in among the grass. His eyes were fixed on her face keenly, yet with an absence of expression as of a judge, passive, impartial before the evidence.

But Patience could not go on. Than had never liked her really, she knew that, but he had always respected her, and now he would no more. Hobart, Richard, Lyman, the bank trustees, held her seared with the iron brand of dishonor. Could she hope for a more delicate perception from him, born and bred in the same tradition? Suddenly she could not bear this—that he should judge her a thief!

"You ain't afraid to speak out?" Than said at last curiously.

Her unwavering candor answered him:

"Yes, I am, too, afraid."

"Well, you needn't to be. I guess I've wintered an' summered with you, an' there ain't anythin' you can make out to do that's liable to amaze me." It was ambiguous, but from some quality in his voice she drew a new force, and slowly, haltingly, yet with clearness, she told him the whole story, beginning with the quarrel between Hallie and Dick.

As she talked, her heart of innocence grew warm again within her; she faced him gallantly, although her eyes were wistful with appeal for understanding.

"They all deem me a thief—all o' them," she ended, "even Lyman Gillette."

"What's he got to do with it?" in a sharp divergence from the main issue.

"Nothin'." She flushed faintly, even in the stress of this final pleading. "He—we were—it's all over, Than. He was frightened when he found out what kind o' a girl I am really."

"Did he throw you over?" his face near to hers, so that she noted clearly how his blue eyes burned, how strong the line of his set jaw.

"I gave him his freedom."

"He wouldn't stand by you when

you needed him! He is a cur!" His tone was cold with contempt.

"A man wouldn't want a wife out o' jail." She laughed forlornly at the poor jest.

Than laughed, as if actually amused. "There won't be any difficulty 'bout that," easily. "I'll pay up what's due the bank, an' you can pay me Hallie's money. It was her second check caused the mischief. An' pretty soon talk'll die down, or some new wonder'll take place to make the old women o' both sexes cackle."

Patience shook with the long sigh of her relief. Haddan Jail had been a gaunt specter of the night hours. But his real opinion of her?

"I ain't a wicked girl, Than; I'm just a little fool." The words were childish, but the soul of invincible gallantry looked up at him.

The man smiled, neither in scorn nor in pity, but with a kind of reverence that illumined his hard face. He took her hand in both his.

"You knew 'twasn't legal, an' you knew I'd be all stirred up at the liberty o' it, yet you did it!" he mused, as if to himself.

"I didn't seem to sense any o' that. I just thought o' poor little Hallie, sick an' eager for that money."

"You *are* a little fool!" He repeated her words, his voice soft and deep. "As I view it, things would be consid'ble mixed up if there was many more like you."

"Oh, nobody must be like me!" in an extremity of humbleness.

He wrung her hand between his. "But it helps my faith in—well, I guess 'tis religion—to know you."

"You don't think I'm a—a—thief?" gaspingly.

"Lord, you think I'm a fool?" He stood up rather violently. "I think you're a saint—or as near one as I want to come." He cracked his whip at his oxen, shouted loudly at them, and walked away, without another turn or glance.

Patience, on her stone, put her head down in her arms, and, for the first time since she had worn pigtails and a tier,

wept without restraint. Than understood! It was like the quiet that follows the end of great pain of body, and all her strained sinews rang weakly.

The night was perfectly still, and bitterly cold; the stars were bleak, as if splintered from ice. The wheels of a wagon jolting down to Gilead creaked to a tune: "Freeze to-night; freeze to-night."

From the mansion, looming big and black in the star gleam, came forth Patience with a lantern, and hurried, at her usual impetuous gait, to the barn.

"Where on earth are you off to now?" It was her mother's voice, and a lamp glowed in the door.

"I'm just goin' for straw to cover Phil's rosebushes. I promised her the last thing I would before the first freeze, an' it's comin' now."

"You do take the most outlandish seasons for doin' things! Here it's nigh to 'leven o'clock." She shut the door with a querulous bang.

"I haven't had any time before," the girl told herself, but mildly, and disappeared into the barn.

The year was far gone into December, a marvelous, amber-hued autumn of warm haze and soft winds. Hallie was entirely well, and that day had seen Felicity and Austen married. Patience was, as she told herself, "tired 'nough to drop off her feet." But the roses were Felicity's most beautiful bushes, and a promise is a promise.

"If that triffin' Bart hasn't taken all the straw off some place!" After a thorough rummage: "Well, I got to have it, whether or no. I guess 'tis likely Than's got some. I can creep into his barn by the little door."

Presently she had put the lantern on the floor of the great, warm, silent barn, and was routing out bundles of straw. She shook the straw loose from the strings, and crammed it into her basket. The lantern flared, flickered, and died down.

"Oh, my king! If Bart's forgot to fill it!" She jerked it up into the air, raised the slide, and, in the unimportant way by which come monstrous calam-

ities, dropped it into the basket of straw. The lantern went out, but the straw blazed up instantly. She kicked the lantern, harmless now, across the barn, snatched up the basket, and darted from the barn into the cold night, out into the trampled, bare farmyard. In the country, fire is the supreme calamity. The basket fell upon the thick earth, flamed a minute, and died out—Patience, on her knees, aiding to that end with handfuls of loam. She sprang up thankfully, then stopped in a shock of sick horror—heat was at her feet, around her ankles; a blaze of light spouted to her waist. Her thin calico skirt was afire!

Something tremendous seized her, beat her, rolled her on the ground, dragged her through the dirt, muffled her in heavy wrappings, carried her into the barn, and laid her on the floor.

"Are you hurt?" Than knelt on the floor beside her, his lantern held in one hand.

Patience thrust back the mass of hair loosened all around her face.

"No! Yes! I guess I'm burned some, an' I feel like I'd been through Uncle Eli Bass' grist mill." She sat up at once, and began to examine a red bar on her arm. "How you come to be here?"

"I hadn't turned in, an' I saw the light in the barn. I came out to reconnoiter."

"An' found me stealin' your straw!" She laughed wearily, and her head surged a little.

Than sat down beside her, and in a manner of competent simplicity, drew her into his arms, holding her steady.

"I calculate you don't know 'tis on for midnight," composedly. "Were you 'lowin' to make a straw bed to sleep on to-night?"

"I promised to cover up Felicity's flowers the first freeze." It was passing strange to lie thus, her head in the hollow of Than's shoulder, yet she did not move.

"I warrant it was some project for Hallie or Phil. You listen to me, Patty: Those sisters o' yours have both o' 'em got likely husbands, competent

to look out for 'em without any more assistance from you. When you goin' to come live with me, an' take care o' me?" He put his face down to hers, and kissed her.

The girl felt not only her head, but the whole world whirling like a top.

"You don't need to be taken care of." It was all that occurred to her in the vast confusion.

"I view it different. I've had stolen from me my post office, my piano, an' my money, an' now my barn's been set afire, all by the same person."

Patience drew herself out of his arms.

"An' Felicity?" strangely.

He faced her without a quiver.

"Felicity's a little, pretty girl. She's sweet, an' she's good, an' I thought I prized her, an' I did—in a way, an' it hurt—bad—to lose her. But it's you, my queer little darlin', that I truly prized always, an' I never knew it till the—"

"When?" an eager whisper.

"The day you forged my name. A girl that could love her sister like that, an' trust me like that—" He stooped till his face was hidden in her soft hair, and his arms clasped her hard against his heart.

"How you know I care?" Her voice came, small, but valorous, from his breast.

"I don't! But I'm goin' to have you just the same. I *got* to have you, Patty!" His voice was deep and soft as she had heard it once only in all her

life before, the morning she had told him about her part in the check. "We've fought a number o' times, off an' on, since the first day I saw you—a little girl with a mop o' hair in your eyes, an' a smile that made all the animals follow you round—an' you've won most times—but you've always won fair."

"Because you let me!" and she flung both her arms around his neck in a passion of love; sweet and strange and bewildering, yet not new—rather of the old, old times, of childhood.

In the still, dim barn, where the cattle and horses slept and stirred and slept again, the two held each other tight, not needing speech, realizing, in a slow happiness, the long-made bond between them.

Suddenly the girl spoke: "Than, those roses o' Felicity's will freeze harder'n a wall if we don't cover 'em quick."

He lifted her to her feet regretfully.

"You let me bind 'em up, sweetheart. You take you to bed."

"No"—all her queer, changeling charm soft upon him—"I got to help, too, or you won't be done till sunup."

The man, his hand on her slender shoulders, shook her in his strength. "I always hated a domineerin' woman or a man that gave right in to her!" His cheek was laid to hers, his lips sought hers, his voice was full of a tender irony.

"So do I." The words were whispered against his face. "I despise 'em both." At last her lips pressed his.



To Heaven by Aeroplane

MISS ALICE WRIGHT, the sister of the famous brother kings of the air, is a great admirer of the inventions of the Wrights for aerial navigation, and, like them, she has a fine sense of humor.

One day, with Orville Wright and her little niece, she was watching the flight of a speedy and an apparently unreliable aeroplane.

"Uncle Orville," said the little girl, "can you get to heaven in one of those machines?"

"Not by going up," interjected Miss Wright, "but if you have lived a very good life, you may do it by coming down."

WAR NO MORE!

BY JAMES HAY, JR.

LAY down your arms!

Happiness and howitzers are strangers. The stories of practically every battle have blotted, not emblazoned, the pages of the world's history.

Content has never come down the bloodstained rivers of the earth. It sails the placid streams of countries that are at peace. If you care to look for it, you can find a picturesqueness in factory and shop, even as much as in camp and glittering saber.

Lay down your arms!

There are fables of plumed knights, of the rush of the charge, and of facing fearful odds, but we never read of the women and children whose woe followed every fight. Entranced by the narratives of men, iron-thewed, we forget the tears of those who would not be comforted.

There are grander, more gorgeous, wars for us to wage—wars against destitution, wars to beat back the ravages of disease, wars to silence the voice of fraud.

There sounds in our ears every hour the bugle call to arms—

To heal afflictions that never before have been healed;

To show to the cities' imprisoned poor the red roses of gardens;

To lay down for children stepping-stones to usefulness;

To teach the unenlightened soul the beauties of the moon, and the grandeur of mountains sleeping in the distance under their covering of magic purple.

Legalize no more murder. Build no more statues around which the tears of millions flow. Armed conflicts have been caused always by somebody's selfishness. The more glorious struggles of to-day must spring from unselfishness, love—from neither anger nor thirst for power.

For declarations of war substitute far-flung messages of new-found benefits for humanity from country to country.

War is woe. Peace is a world's happiness.

Lay down your arms!

A MODERN PETRUCHIO.

By HELEN R. MARTIN

Author
of
"The Parasite,"
"Tillie, a Mennonite Maid," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
JEAN PALEOLOGUE



WINNIFRED, sitting with her sewing in the library of her charming, cozy home on the campus of the American college where her foreign husband held the chair of German literature, was awaiting the arrival of an expected guest, and the high color in her bright young face revealed her vivid interest in the occasion. It was indeed odd, she was reflecting, as, her sewing in her lap, she gazed thoughtfully out upon the snow-covered campus, that her very first visitor since her marriage, four months ago, should be her old college friend, Augusta Lawrence, who had so earnestly deprecated her marrying "a beer-drinking, browbeating German, a man whose highest ideal for a woman"—so had Augusta written to her upon hearing of her betrothal—"is that she be a capable and economical *hausfrau*!"

Augusta herself, consecrated ever since their college days to her solemn mission of helping to emancipate her shackled sex, eschewed the marriage state as "unworthy the Higher, New Type of Woman"; she considered that Winnifred had "denied her Better Self" in settling down to the low career of taking care of a man; and, of

course, the man's being a German greatly aggravated the offense.

"She goes about the country lecturing," Winnifred had explained to her husband when announcing the expected guest, "and she is coming here to address our coeds, Otto, on 'Woman's New Economic Place in Our Modern Civilization.'"

"*Lieber Gott!*" had been the learned professor's comment. "Goes about like a roaring lion, does she, seeking whom she may entice to the 'Higher Life of Woman'? *Ach, Himmel!*"

In spite of all this, however, Winnifred, when at last her friend arrived and was shown into the library, allowed herself to be discovered at work upon the meek and lowly task of darning a hole in one of Otto's coats. Nor, as she rose to greet Augusta and go with her to her room, did she lay aside her homely work, but carried it with her over her arm, keeping her thimble on her finger and her needle in her hand.

"What a dear, pretty home, Winnifred!" Augusta smiled radiantly as they went upstairs together. "A perfect background for one's life—if one can avoid the weakness of making it

one's *whole* life. You, Winnifred, I am sure, do not let marriage and house-keeping submerge you, do you, dear, even though you are married to a native German?"

"I find they can be very engrossing, Gussie, dear—marriage and house-keeping."

"Augusta, please, Winnifred, if you don't mind. That's what I always fear for a young wife—that she find the *lesser* duties that marriage entails quite pushing aside the higher possibilities of her womanhood."

"Most women *see* no higher possibilities for their womanhood, Gus—Augusta—than keeping their husbands happy and—*and* comfortable."

"I know it," Augusta sadly admitted. "Isn't it lamentable? It must make us ashamed of our sex. You, Winnifred, could never degenerate into that sort of a woman, though I feared for you, as you know, a harder struggle in resisting the tendency than if you had married one of our own countrymen. You have had to struggle not only for your own ideals, but against his—for we all know what a German's ideals of womanhood are. You never told me Professor von Hellweg was an exception."

"I'm afraid, my dear," Winnifred replied serenely as she assisted her visitor, standing before the bureau in the guest room, to remove her hat and veil, "that dear Otto is too thoroughly a German to be an exception to his countrymen in anything."

"How, then, dear, did you ever find any basis of union with him?"

"We fell in love with each other, Gus—Augusta."

"But," smiled Augusta, "how primitive, dear! Oh!" she suddenly exclaimed, a deep color dyeing her fine, earnest face as her eyes happened to fall upon the card sticking out of a bowl of pink roses which stood on a table in the bay window of the room. "When did those come, Winnifred, dear?"

"This morning by express. And as the box was labeled 'Flowers' I thought

I ought to open it at once and put them in water."

"Thank you. How beautiful they are!" murmured Augusta, stepping for a moment to the table and burying her blushing face in the pink mass.

"And such a quantity, Augusta, in the dead of winter. It means that either his devotion or his purse, or both, are very large indeed. I hope he is equally lavish in the matter of candy?"

"Candy, my dear!" protested Augusta. "I think I should be insulted if a man treated me so trivially as to send me candy. Really, sending a girl candy stands for all the frivolity which I so deprecate in the relation of the sexes."

"Does the gentleman who sends the flowers share your views about things in general, Augusta?" Winnifred inquired as they sat down together in the cushioned bay-window seat. Winnifred resumed her darning of her husband's coat, while Augusta tenderly caressed the petals of the roses just at her elbow.

"Oh, Winnifred," she sighed, "he is a romantic *Frenchman*! How could he understand my point of view on any thing under the sky?"

"Yet he pursues you with lovely roses wheresoe'er you rove, Augusta?"

"They follow me everywhere."

"These foreigners do know how to make love, don't they?" sighed Winnifred.

"Don't they?" Augusta, off her guard for the moment, impulsively exclaimed; and Winnifred realized, from the light in her eyes, that, impregnable as she thought herself, the French gentleman's wooing had somehow awakened her as no one of her numerous American "followers" had succeeded in doing.

"Your poor Frenchman is having troubles of his own, it seems, isn't he, trying to make love to *you*?"

"I'm afraid he does find it a rather discouraging pursuit," Augusta admitted. "How industrious you are, Winnifred," with a dubious glance at the coat.

"Yes," Winnifred, with obviously forced cheerfulness, responded, "I'm

trying to get them patched by the time Otto gets home. He's so particular."

"Particular?"

"About his clothes being well taken care of."

"You spend your time mending holes like that, dear?" Augusta gently inquired.

"Otto expects me to, dear, when the holes happen to be in his clothes."

"He doesn't think, then, that you, a gifted, a college-bred, woman, might find higher uses for your time?"

"Well, you see, dear," said Winnifred pensively, "being a German, I think he could not conceive of a 'higher use' to which a woman could put her time than keeping her husband mended up and well fed and generally comfortable."

A moment's ominous silence was Augusta's comment upon this.

"But, dear Winnifred," she presently asked, her tone almost hushed with consternation, "for him to have such a conception of *you*—with your abilities, your strength of character!"

"All my strength of character seems to have gone into my love for dear Otto, Gussie."

"Winnifred, you shock me!"

"Oh, if you are shocked *already*, wait until you see us together! Otto can't *help* it—can he, dear?—that he happened to be born in a land so much less civilized than America."

"Oh, I don't know that we can call Germany less civilized—except, of course, in her ideals for her woman-kind."

"Wait until you have heard Otto's views," said Winnifred darkly as she rose, tossed the coat over her arm, and took her guest's hand. "Come downstairs now, dear; Otto will soon be coming in, and of course I must be right on the spot."

"On what spot?" Augusta inquired austere as they strolled downstairs.

"On the spot where he expects me to be when he comes in."

"It sounds insufferably arbitrary—to bring it down to a special *spot* where you must be when he arrives."

"To greet him, you know, and—and

make him comfortable. He expects those little attentions."

"I trust he is equally concerned about making *you* comfortable?"

"But he is too much engaged with his work—a *man's* work, you know—the *big* concerns of life."

"Among which 'big concerns' your comfort isn't a detail?"

"But he expects me, of course, to take care of my own comfort."

"'Expects!' To meet Professor von Hellweg's expectations seems, my dear, to be your life work."

"Love does reduce us women to just such a pass, I'm afraid," Winnifred gayly lamented.

"I confess, Winnifred, I have no conception of such 'love,'" said Augusta, with a shrug of her shapely shoulders.

"Once you are married, you'll fall in line like the rest of us, Augusta."

"If I thought that, Winnifred, I should certainly never marry! I never would have believed—"

"Ah, there's Otto now!" Winnifred whispered, in a tone of awe, as, reaching the head of the stairs, they heard the front door open. "Oh, I hope," she said, nervously apprehensive, "you'll make a good impression on him, Augusta—which, of course, you *will*," she added politely. "He is rather particular about my friends."

"'Particular' about your friends, too! He chooses your friends for you?"

"Well, of course he doesn't exactly 'choose' them, but—well, you know, dear, a wife does want her husband to like her friends. And I am sure," she hastily added, "Otto can't help being pleased with *you* as a friend for me."

"He certainly will *not* find me the kind of woman he admires!"

"No; he likes them plumper—oh!" Winnifred caught herself up as she met Augusta's shocked eyes turned upon her. "Well, of course your views would seem strange to him. I'd advise you to conceal them, Augusta."

"Not I! He shall *hear* them."

"Then I'm afraid you'll, in return,



"Does the gentleman who sends the flowers share your views about things in general?"

hear *his*," said Winnifred, looking concerned, "and you won't like his."

"I dare say not."

Winnifred moved swiftly downstairs to her husband as he at that moment appeared in the hall, while Augusta slowly followed—witnessing, in her dignified advance, her friend's manner of deference to the man as she stood passively while he piled upon her outstretched arms his heavy overcoat, his hat, and his books.

"Ah, it is our guest!" he exclaimed, hastening forward to greet Augusta as she reached the foot of the stairs, and not waiting for Winnifred to present him. Poor Winnifred was, indeed, too much occupied for the moment with her struggles in disposing of his belongings on the rack to perform the ceremony of introduction.

"Miss Lawrence!" Professor von

Hellweg bowed over her hand with the elaborate courtesy habitual to the German gentleman. "It is a great pleasure to welcome you to our home."

Augusta's air of disapproval softened a bit before his beautiful homage to her womanhood. She could not help feeling that, in Winnifred's place, *she* would never have permitted such an attitude of gallantry to degenerate to the low level of the relation which at present manifestly existed between the husband and wife.

"But I feel," she replied, smiling up at him as he led her into the library, Winnifred following with the coat still over her arm, "I feel I may prove a discordant element in this cozy, pretty home in which I find my Winnifred."

"Discordant?" The professor inclined his head inquiringly as, having placed her comfortably before the fire,

he sat opposite her in a deep armchair. Winnifred, choosing a chair at a respectful distance, applied herself to her mending.

"I'm going to stir Winnifred up, I warn you, Professor von Hellweg."

"Stir her up! Does she need it? She seems to me to be doing very well."

"From your standpoint, no doubt. I suspect, however, she has let herself lose sight of some of the truth to which we—our little, exclusive coterie at college—dedicated our lives."

"The undergraduates called us—the little, exclusive coterie, you know—the *Illuminati*, Otto," put in Winnifred.

"Ach, Gott! But you see"—he turned to Augusta, and spoke conclusively—"Winnifred got married."

"Our modern American conception of marriage doesn't involve the idea of arrested development for the woman."

"She develops her heart, and it is better so. Woman has not much brain to develop, nor *need* have. It is the big heart she needs."

"Our dear Winnifred," smiled Augusta sadly, "used to have very different ideas. I warn you, professor, I'm going to recall them to her mind."

The professor raised a deprecating hand. "I hope not. She is better *so*," with a twirl of his thumb in the direction of the figure toiling over his coat.

"I don't like her 'so'!" retorted Augusta.

"Ah, it is a pretty sight—to see the woman domestic, industrious. Winnie suits me so."

"But the question is," said Augusta archly: "Do you suit *her*?"

"Is that the question?" the professor asked, puzzled. "But that is neither here nor there."

"To the American woman, Professor von Hellweg, it is both here and there. I am afraid Winnifred forgets she is an American woman."

"Oh, yes, she is greatly improved. Almost she is quite like a German *hausfrau*. I do not complain." He turned to his *hausfrau*. "Bring me now my *kaffee*, Winnie, and the evening paper."

"Yes, Otto."

She dutifully rose and left the room, returning in a moment, followed by a maid with a tray containing coffee and wafers.

"Winnie," said her husband, when she had served him and their guest and was about to help herself, "don't you see it grows dark?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Winnifred apologetically; and, quickly rising, she crossed the room and switched on the electric lights.

"Winnie," Otto slightly raised his voice to speak to her across the room, "bring to me the book from my coat pocket in the hall."

"Yes, Otto." She went out, and returned in a moment with the book. "Is it something new?" she asked, with a glance at the title as she gave it to him.

"Yes, yes—but not for you—not for a woman's brain. Women must not dabble in subjects beyond their depth. Better stick to your needle!" with a lordly motion of his well-shaped hand toward his mended coat.

"Yes, Otto—excuse me."

"Take my cup, Winnie." He stopped her as she was about to sit down, and she relieved him at once of the cup and saucer he held out to her.

"So you are going to lecture to our coeds, Miss Lawrence?" He turned to their guest, who, with downcast eyes and flushed face, was sipping her coffee.

"Yes, Professor von Hellweg; and I wish I might have the pleasure of seeing *you* at my lecture. I'm sure you would get some new ideas."

"So?" But I have many times read all these arguments of the strong-minded women. But, though I think you will not tell me anything new, yet," he added gallantly, "it will give me great pleasure to hear you, and more especially to *see* you." He smiled with open admiration of her loveliness.

"But unless you come prepared to take me seriously——"

"Ah, but no one could take you otherwise, my dear lady. I see how you are an exception to your sex."

"Oh, no, I am not! You should see



Prof. szor von Helweg bowed over her hand with elaborate courtesy.

how eagerly our sister women everywhere respond to the call of us who have already had the awakening."

"Yes? Well, well—but you will not long be free to do such mischief," he said playfully. "Soon I think the sender of the beautiful roses will make you find lecturing to your sister women as dust and ashes in your mouth. You are much too handsome to be giving yourself to a mission instead of to a man. It is so much more entertaining to be loved."

"As, for instance, Winnifred is loved—and cherished?" Augusta gently asked, with a slight lift of her brows.

"You see how contented she is."

"Oh!" Augusta's eyes betrayed how

bad, beyond her expectations, she was finding things.

"Yes, yes," said the professor, still playfully, "a husband and babies are the only things that will keep a woman out of mischief. Now, then," he added, rising, "if you, my dear lady, will excuse me until dinner time, I will take my paper and book and go to my study. Come, Winnie, and bring me my slippers."

"Yes, Otto. Excuse me just a minute, Augusta."

Augusta, whose pained gaze followed the professor as he rudely passed from the room ahead of his wife, recalled the elaborate politeness with which he had, a little while before, stepped back to let her go before him into the library. His fine manners, it seemed, were not for his wife. Well, Win-

nifred's lamentable weakness in acquiescing in such barbarism made her deserve just about what she was getting. So concluded Augusta.

"You and I will have our breakfast alone this morning, Augusta; Otto takes his in bed on Sunday," Winnifred announced, as, upon her guest's appearance in the dining room next day, she began to arrange a tray for her husband. "Let me see—have I everything? His orange, his little pot of coffee, his hot rolls, boiled egg, buttered toast, and Sunday paper," she anxiously enumerated the items on the tray. "Now, then," picking up the rather heavy load, "if you'll excuse me

just a minute, dear, while I carry this to Otto——"

"But, dear," Augusta protested, "why don't you let a servant carry it up to him?"

"Oh, my dear, he expects *me* to see after his little comforts—that's what I'm *for*! A servant might slight something," replied Winnifred as she laboriously bore the tray from the room.

She returned after a few minutes, and they sat down to the table.

"Do you want to go to church with me, Augusta, or stay home and talk to Otto?" Winnifred asked as they ate their fruit.

"Otto does not, then, go with you?"

"Oh, no; he loafs Sunday mornings."

"You are so zealous for church that you go without him? I don't seem to remember you as so religious, Winnifred."

"But you know the German idea, Augusta—that women are for *kinder, kirche, küche*. Otto isn't a churchgoer himself, but a woman without piety would seem to him monstrous."

"So you go to church because this precious Otto 'expects' you to, do you?"

"That's my only reason. I'd rather stay at home and rest, as Otto does. But he would not approve at all."

"Then if you go to church only to please him, he at least might go with you."

"Oh, but I could not ask him to put himself out to such an extent!"

"Dear me, Winnifred, have you become weak-minded?" Augusta burst out, unable longer to repress her indignation. "How can you have forgotten so flagrantly the high standard of womanhood you, with the rest of us, held in the dear old college days! Such apostasy, Winnifred, from the Truth we so earnestly forged out for ourselves!"

"Ah, yes! How very seriously young goslings at college will take themselves!" smiled Winnifred. "We were so conscious of our superiority and our dignity in those days, weren't we, Gussie? It was positively weird! Wait

until you've married your Frenchman. *He* will teach you some common sense."

"Never! He will never have the opportunity. Before I came here, Winnifred, I was almost deciding to consider the possibility of yielding. But this experience in your home, dearest Winnifred, pretty and peaceful as your environment seems, has made me see that I must *not* weaken in my resolution never to wed with a foreigner."

"It's awfully heroic of you, Gussie, to withstand a bombardment of such lovely roses! Not to mention the thick letter this morning, the telegram last night! Such *devotion*!"

"Winnifred, what has so transformed you?"

"Why, dear, obviously *Otto*."

"But a love that undermines one's principles is unworthy the name."

"Do you find me so very base, dear?"

"You are not like the same girl, Winnifred."

"Otto thinks I've greatly 'improved,' you know."

"His ideas of a woman—of a wife," breathed Augusta, with horror. "They are so unworthy of my Winnifred!"

"Winnie!" Otto's voice suddenly came to them from the upstairs hall. "I am now ready to rise and dress."

"Yes, Otto," Winnifred called back. "Excuse me, Augusta," she hastily added. "I must go up and lay out his fresh underclothes, and turn on the water for his bath."

It was after the three-o'clock Sunday dinner, over their coffee in the library, that our young lady with a mission found herself unable longer to hold herself down in the presence of what she felt to be the unworthy, the perverted, complacency of this dreadful married pair.

The professor, looking comfortable and genial after his good dinner, was playfully informing his guest that in Germany their beautiful young ladies were too well taken care of to be allowed to do as *she* was permitted to do—roam at large, unprotected, exposed to the open admiration of mixed audiences.

"You think I should be doing much better if the worthy object of my life were to look after the physical comfort and well-being of some man?" she brought out, with repressed indignation.

"Exactly!" He smiled serenely. "That is a woman's work in life—her only natural function in the economy of society—to make it possible for the man to do the *great* work of the world. She must not get a false idea of her proper place."

"Then *she* does no great work?"

"Great enough—she makes it possible for the man to do his. That ought to satisfy her even if she be ambitious. She ought to be ambitious only for *him*."

"And her reward?" Augusta inquired, with a lift of her eyebrows.

"Seeing her *mann* efficient, capable, useful. She has her compensation also in the happiness of motherhood. She should, of course, have many children."

"Many! On a professor's income! She should not make the least objection to bearing and rearing a huge family on a few thousands a year?"

"Those conditions produce a hardy, self-reliant race of children, you know, not like the pampered, inefficient offspring of the rich."

"And you, Winnifred—you agree with your husband in all this?"

"I always agree with my husband, Augusta."

"Merely because he is your husband?"

"He expects me to agree with him, Gussie."

"Professor von Hellweg," said Augusta firmly, "your idea of a woman is an insult to her! If I found myself married to a man who held me in such a light I'd look a tragic wreck! And you, Winnifred, you *flourish* under it! You look buoyant, happy!"

"But Otto does draw the line at actual abuse, Augusta, dear," Winnifred laughed.

"The reason Winnifred looks happy is that she possesses the only true essentials to a woman's happiness—hav-

ing something to take care of, to cherish, and being herself taken care of."

"In other words, she has *you*, my dear professor—which, in your sublime egotism, you think ought to fill her whole horizon, satisfy the deepest needs of her soul, her mind!"

"I am her husband—is it not enough?"

"I assure you I should not find being a slave to you all that was essential to my happiness in life," replied Augusta, with ponderous sarcasm.

"No, Otto, she wouldn't, that's true," Winnifred cheerfully admitted. "She'd see you—damned first—wouldn't you, Augusta?"

"I would, Winnifred."

"Ladies, ladies!" protested the professor, with a lift of his substantial hand. "But, Miss Augusta, don't you spoil my Winnie for me."

"I wish I could *unspoil* her! You have pulled her down from the heights, professor."

"Was she ever on 'the heights'—my Winnie? But it is cold up there—she's warmer in my big arms. *Wie, meine frau?*" he demanded, roughly patting Winnifred's shoulder.

Augusta rose haughtily. "Excuse me; I shall go out for a walk," she said coldly; and before either of them could reply she had left the room.

A half hour later, coming in from her brisk walk over the snow-covered country, during which she had succeeded in working off, to some extent, the intensity of her feelings, Augusta was arrested in her passage up to her room by the sound of hilarious laughter in a "den" opening off from the hall she was traversing.

"It is good," she heard the professor exclaim, with his charming foreign accent, "to have back my mate for an hour. I am so tired of the mincing *hausfrau*, with her 'Yes, Otto.' I want back my little devil!"

"You're not half so tired of your 'mincing *hausfrau*' as I am!" cried Winnifred. "Carrying that heavy tray upstairs, attending divine service, pretending to mend your old coat—oh!

Run down the cellar, Otto, and get a bottle of beer, and we'll drink to the health of the feeble creature! I'm done with her—I slay her! Augusta shall know the truth about us. *Run!*"

"I go!" returned Otto, and before Augusta could remove herself from the landing the portière in front of the door was thrust back, and the professor flung himself out, nearly knocking her over.

She barely acknowledged, with a stiff bow, his elaborate apologies as she at once passed him and went into the den to her hostess; and Otto, as if glad to escape, hurried on downstairs.

Augusta sank into a chair before Winnifred, her face white and startled.

"Oh," cried Winnifred, alarmed, "what's the matter?"

"I overheard you and Professor von Hellweg just now."

"Oh!" cried Winnifred again, clapping her hands over her face.

"What did you mean, Winnifred?"

"By what, Gussie?" came feebly from Winnifred.

"You ordered him—that man—to go and get you a bottle of beer—to run! He said—you said—Winnifred Wolcott von Hellweg, have you and your professor been trifling with me?"

Winnifred dramatically sank on her knees before her friend. "Forgive us, Augusta! We have deceived you—we are not what we seem. Otto is, in truth, my slave, and I his tyrant. He says we are mates, equals, comrades—but he is, in very truth, my serf, who heeds my least behest."

"Do you mean to tell me that neither you nor he hold the dreadful views of Woman and her Place in Life which you have been flaunting?"

"Nay, verily, Gussie. I assure you, I am still on the heights—though my bonnie's

plaidie shelters me from the chill blast of my awful superiority. But I swear to you, Augusta, I share all your views, and I do *not* believe in the emancipation of man."

"Why did you do this, Winnifred? Do get up and sit down!"

"I wanted to bring home to you, Augusta," said Winnifred, rising from her knees, "as forcibly as I could, the fact that your idea of a German husband is as farcical, as unreal, as has been this silly little comedy we've been playing for your benefit. And the moral of it all is—marry that Frenchman who bestreth your path with roses, telegrams, and thick missives composed in grammatical French. Think of the



"Here's to Woman—long may she wave!"

money you'll save in free French lessons for your children!"

"The impression that I find uppermost"—Augusta groped for an expression of her confused amazement before the situation in which she found herself—"is of the extraordinary chumminess of a married pair who could successfully perpetrate such a plot. It argues a relation between you just the extreme opposite of that which you have led me to believe existed."

"Yes, we *are* chummy—as I feel," Winnifred subtly added, "we could not be if Otto were an American. Oh, I've nothing against Americans. But I wouldn't give my German for any *six* of my countrymen!"

"No one asks you to be a bigamist."

"You forgive us, Augusta?"

"Winnifred," Augusta bewailed, "you've done me an irreparable injury—how can I ever again be earnest and forceful in my public utterances? Why, the most solemn truths in my whole repertoire will loom ridiculous when I think of the way you and Otto have lured and trapped me."

"Oh, Augusta," Winnifred said, with concern, "have I ruined your career?"

"You've taken the wind out of my sails. I shall feel like a joke after this

when I make my appeal to my sister women."

"Then I've not lived in vain, Gussie, if I've made you see a joke."

"See *myself* as a joke, you mean?" said Augusta suspiciously.

"Oh, now you go too far, dear. Ah, here comes Otto with the beer! Otto," she gayly greeted him as he came in with a tray of glasses and bottles, "Gussie's found us out! But she generously agrees to forgive and forget."

"Ah, well, then," cried Otto, filling their glasses and lifting his own, "here's to Woman—long may she wave!"

"Think, Miss Lawrence," he remarked, when they had drunk his toast, "what a risk Winnie took in permitting me to relax for a few days from the high American ideal of a husband! I might have acquired the *habit* of bullying her."

"I'd soon readjust *that*, Otto!" cried Winnifred. "And here," she added, lifting her glass a second time, "is to Augusta's immediate betrothal to a foreigner—a Frenchman! And if he prove the success my German is she'll ever bless you and me, Otto, for having shown her how unfounded were her dark misgivings about foreigners as husbands."



A Day in Lent

THE rough wind for a while forgets
Its grievance; every treetop stills,
And venders prate of violets,
Purpling their trays, and daffodils.

A reverend church bell shakes the air
And brings you pacing up the street,
A book between your hands, a rare
Demureness on your eyelids sweet.

Long miles from town, an old stone wall,
A wide bright meadow, lush and wet,
A stream where perch are dawdling—call
My vagrant feet that way to set.

But, since you go within to pray,
Close, close to yours my steps shall cling;
One hour, dim, cloistered, shall outweigh
A green day out o' doors, and Spring!

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.



The Work of our Hands

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "The Affair at Penfield," "Father at All Angels," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

NOWADAYS, when even the orthodoxly devout take their Scriptures figuratively, and the Higher Criticism enables them to explain anything that may be a little difficult or distasteful to them so as to make it fit readily with the limitations of their knowledge or the breadth of their desires, it seems almost medieval to ask for the literal interpretation of any text. Nevertheless, however archaic the plea, here it is made; whatever else we read as merely symbolic, whatever else we can believe to mean something quite different from what the language seems to convey—let us interpret literally these words: "The work of our hands sanctify Thou to us."

The work of our hands, observe; not the work of our heads, of our imaginations, of our millions of dollars, of our benevolences, of our selfish greed, of our ambition, and of our ambition's nobler sister—our aspiration! The work of our *hands*—our dishwashing and our darning, our weeding and our kneading, our churning and our preserving, our knitting and our sweeping, our silver polishing and our frying—all those occupations which the higher education, and the "higher life," and the growth of the factory system, and the increasing prevalence of the vacuum

cleaner, and grand opera, and moving pictures, and all the rest of the miracles of our blessed century have conspired to relegate to the limbo of the unused and the unknown and to group under the head of "drudgery."

In advocating the study of this prayer, and as literal an interpretation of it as possible, the writer speaks, not as a reactionary who prefers the stage-coach to the Twentieth Century Limited, or the braided-rag mat to the Axminster carpet, or who thinks it better to wash dishes than to listen to "The Magic Flute," and nobler to darn socks than to teach the orphan girl to read, but merely as one who has lately come to realize the fun—the plain, ordinary fun—of using her hands in many ways which were natural to her grandmother, but of which she herself was reared in ignorance. And, looking about upon her friends, she has been struck by the similarity of their situation.

There, for example, is Genevieve. She was brought up in the perfectly correct, middle-class way of her period; she learned nothing domestically useful, unless by inadvertence, during her early childhood. At seven she was graduated from the kindergarten into the "first grade," and thereupon entered a scholastic career which occupied her fully for the next fifteen years. She



"No, it's nothing at all to do—but fun. You buy a paper pattern——" And she went on joyfully with the processes of dressmaking.

didn't "help with the dishes" or the dusting during the early years at home because her mother said, quite rightly, that when she wasn't in school, or studying, or in bed, she should be out in the air, playing; and that, anyway, "it was not necessary for them to have Genevieve help in the housework."

So Genevieve went to school, and took her music lessons and her dancing lessons and her painting lessons—until they discovered that she was, for all artistic purposes, color blind—and played in the open air, and grew very strong and ruddy, as well as very erudite. And then she went to college without having learned more of the joys of manual labor than might be imparted to her through having to keep her bureau drawers in order. Her mother and her aunts and the servant had done her mending for her even.

At college she continued to acquire knowledge; and, mother, aunts, and servant being some hundreds of miles away, she gave her mending to a fellow student who was working her way through college. And in the fullness of time she departed from the institution of learning with the right to append a degree after her name, a store of information, a host of friends, a sense of personal dignity that was, perhaps, not overweening, and the determination to have a career worthy her training.

Genevieve, at twenty-two, entered a social settlement, where she worked very hard for four or five years. As she dashed about, doing neighborhood visiting, introducing boys to jobs, attending courts to explain to magistrates that delinquent husbands were more useful to their families free and at

work than incarcerated, taking children on summer holidays, convoying sick men and women to the hospitals, serving on committees, attending "hearings" on parks and playgrounds—doing the million and one things that make up a zealous settlement dweller's days—she had no opportunity to learn anything of the satisfactions of needlework. Her mending was now done by one of the neighborhood women, whose husband had abandoned her, and who needed all that she could earn by the exercise of her modest skill to support life. When Genevieve went home for her holidays, naturally she did not take to housework or to sewing for recreation. She rested—and she needed rest—and mother, aunts, the servants, and the local dressmaker labored to fit her sartorially for continuation in the noble fray.

In the fullness of time it happened to Genevieve to fall in love with a young man of modest—very modest—means. And, having been spared all the drudgery of poverty, she had no fear of it, and enthusiastically agreed to marry him and to undertake housekeeping on the tiniest possible sum that was ever expected to supply the wants of two young persons accustomed to the comforts of the prosperous.

Now, this story of Genevieve is not a tragedy of burned meats and obstreperous household budgets. Far from it. Genevieve probably had her difficulties with the kitchen range and the potatoes and eggs, like most of the women in the world. But Genevieve had a well-trained mind, and a well-developed body, and the problems of the kitchen did not cause her to collapse, or the labors of cleaning bring her and her husband either to the divorce court or to that less lurid substitute for the divorce court—mutual disillusionment. On the contrary, Genevieve justified her training, and the young man thought her the most wonderful female being in the world. And all was as it should have been. And as for Genevieve herself, she grew fairly radiant over a discovery she made.

"Why," she cried ecstatically to a caller whom she greeted one day with a yard of Russian crash and a mass of blue and green threads in her hand, "sewing is the greatest fun! What am I making? I'm making a centerpiece and some doilies for every day—not real embroidery, you know, just cross-stitch. It's too fascinating for words!"

Then she led the way proudly, importantly to her workbasket. She called attention to the completeness of its equipment, to the array of scissors for all sorts of purposes, to the number and variety of needles, spools, tape runners, measures, and the like.

"I'm making a dress!" she boasted. "No, it's nothing at all to do—but fun. You buy a paper pattern—" And she went on joyfully with the processes of dressmaking. Suddenly, catching a quizzical gleam in her caller's eyes, she broke off abruptly.

"I dare say I do sound like an imbecile," she admitted. "Talking like this about a thing that all the rest of womankind have known forever and ever. But do you realize that this is the very first thing I have ever done with my hands? Except tennis and golf! It has been like coming into a fortune to learn that there is a whole new world of achievement open to me."

Gently, but firmly, it was pointed out to her that the whole race of women did not take the same glorified view of sewing as she professed. Many of them regarded it as a dreary, eye-trying, headache-producing way of passing the time. It was suggested that perhaps not needlework, but novelty, was what delighted her, and that skill once gained, and workbaskets an old story, she would tire of it.

"It may be so, of course," admitted Genevieve, with the sweet reasonableness she gained from her course in logic. "But I scarcely think so. I felt no such enthusiasm for cookery, though that was also a new art to me. I don't mind it, you understand," she added loyally, "but it doesn't fill me with such complete satisfaction. Why, do you know," she confessed, "I was rather glad to feel a little ill the other day so

that I had to stay in bed? Because it gave me a perfectly good excuse for doing cross-stitch by the hour, whereas if I had been well and up I should have had to take exercise and order food, and cook it, and interrupt myself in a dozen ways. No, I feel that I have come into my own in taking up with sewing."

"Your boys' clubs at the settlement?" she was asked. "Are you going to give them up, or are you going to teach the boys to embroider?"

"Neither," laughed Genevieve. "I'm going to be a perfectly sane person. Sewing will help to keep me so. You see, I look at my boys from month to month, and from year to year, and I feel a little desperate sometimes. It seems to me that, after all, the clubs leave them pretty much where they started; and I get to thinking that perhaps some one else with a greater genius for organization, and a deeper understanding of children, might do a great deal more for them than I do. But when I look on my centerpiece I see that it is as good of its kind as any one could make it. I have a real pride in having produced something as good as any one else could produce out of the same materials, as well as the fun of the production. Oh, but I'm glad to have discovered my hands!"

That was the burden also of the song of Hester, though needlework was not Hester's *métier*. Hester had been very "beautifully" brought up by her father, a novelist, whose private income and whose widowed condition made it easy for him to indulge a passion for travel and for collectorship. Hester spent her youth in various European schools, where she learned all manner of lovely things, and some very useful ones, no doubt. And from the time she was old enough to be companionable she spent her holidays with her father, traveling in wonderlands, or resting for a few months in some gem of an Italian town, or some English hamlet, charming with stone-and-thatch cottages and deep greenery.

It was not at all remarkable, every one said, that Hester, with her upbringing

and her inheritance from her gifted father, should be a poet of parts when she grew up. She continued to travel with him, and she helped him collect, and she feasted on beauty, and made charming little stanzas about it, and about the other vague, haunting things in the world. And by and by they came back home, and opened their long-closed little house in New York, and filled it with the graceful French furniture and the rare brocaded hangings and the Venetian glass and all the rest of the plunder they had acquired.

Among the things which the novelist had collected quite discriminatingly was Russian brass and copper. This was before the days when every one collected it from the factories of the lower East Side of New York. When he had all his treasures unpacked and arranged in their places, he bade his friends come to see them. And Hester bade a cleaning company send a man to polish the brass.

The day of the reception arrived, but no brass polisher had appeared. The day was Sunday, so that she could have no communication with the perfidious company that had failed her. She suggested to the cook that she should polish the brass, but the cook declared that it would be quite impossible for her, with all that she had to do that day. And the waitress was similarly sure that she was not going to be able to get through her own work, let alone some one else's; and the housemaid said that it could scarcely be expected of *her*. And Hester, the poet, looked at the beautiful, but tarnished, brasses and coppers, and then she said:

"Bring me some cloths and chamois and things. And brass polish."

Then she spread newspapers over the table, donned a pair of loose gloves, and fell to. And to hear her tell the story you would infer that she dated real existence from the hour when she discovered that there was such satisfaction in manual labor. She spent the morning polishing, rubbing, surveying the glowing results of her labor.

"I had never known that there was such sport in the world," she declared.

"I suppose it was atavism. I must have had ancestresses who found the fullest expression of their souls in rubbing their mahogany until it shone, in polishing their pewter until they could see their faces in it. And I began to feel like them. I began to strut inside myself; I began to vow that no woman in town had brighter brasses, that no woman had coppers every atom of whose rosy glow was so well brought out as mine.

"Whenever I've been doing verses I feel a little chilled at the end—the lines do not breathe so much beauty as they should, as I meant them to. It will annoyingly force itself across my mind that Shakespeare wrote sonnets, and Keats and Shelley made lyrics, and that the world does not really need inferior poetry. But in the matter of brass polishing I defied competition from the past or the present—yes, or the future. No matter what inventions for cleaning and buffing metal the years may bring forth, it can't be more beautifully cleaned than I cleaned it that Sunday—and lots of times since.

"For, you see, I learned something that day. I learned that I could dispense with an unobliging housemaid, and be all the happier for doing so. I learned that there was a part of me which I was not enjoying to the full—my hands. After all, hands are good for a lot beside the writing of letters and poems, and waving a fan, and being manicured once a week. You cheat



She spent the morning polishing, rubbing, surveying the glowing results of her labor.

them out of their life if you don't give them something to do, something important and necessary and real to do. I'm not much on cooking, and I hate sewing. But my fingers fairly itch to get hold of cloths and brooms and brushes. And they are as grateful to me as can be for giving them some work of their own to do."

But, then, Hester is a poet.

It was a badly varnished table that taught Lois the lesson of the satisfaction to be derived from the use of the hands. Lois had used hers only in the instinctive, half-unconscious way in which most of the hands in her circle were used. She used them in writing and eating and doing her hair and adjusting her collars and greeting her callers; but as a prosperous insurance

broker she had always felt that she was too busy to use them in any more arduous way. And then one day a beguiling salesman induced her to buy a mahogany table which really appealed to nothing in her except her thrift; it was a cheap mahogany table, and, as Lois said afterward, it looked it. It shone, not with rubbing, but with shellac badly applied. And once she had escaped the sound of the beguiling salesman's voice Lois knew that she had done a foolish and an extravagant thing in buying that cheap table.

When she reached her home it had already outdistanced her, as the thing one doesn't want always does. It occupied the dining room, glistening hideously. The colored Dinah who made Lois' bachelor-maidenhood domestically comfortable to her admired it inordinately, however, and Lois had some thoughts of bestowing it upon her. That evening, however, fate sent to her notice an article on "doing over" old furniture. Lois read how scarred and battered treasures picked up here and there had been converted into shining things of beauty. If old pieces, defaced by coats of dingy paint, why not new pieces, desecrated with varnish, she asked herself? Her round table wouldn't be bad except for that stove-polish effect.

Lois, being an impatient person, could not wait until morning, and give a proper order to a furniture repairer in the district. She must, instead, try a little piece at once. She sent Dinah to the nearest little paint shop—she lived happily in a region of small shops to whom closing hour was no fixed time—for sandpaper of various degrees of coarseness, for paint scrapers, for varnish removers. And light-heartedly she began her experiment upon a few inches of the base.

At the end of an hour Lois' hands were discolored beyond the hope of recovery under any ordinary treatment; lumps of varnish, parted from the table, clung to her eyebrows and bedaubed her hair; small, gummy puddles of gory-looking glue stained the papers spread upon the floor. But Lois was

happy. Frightful as was the disorder by which she was surrounded, she was happy. The article had told the truth; it was possible for one pair of unaccustomed hands to remove from wood all the sticky stuffs and stains with which it had entered into the mind of Grand Rapids to spoil it, and, with a virgin surface, to begin again. Lois' browned, reddened hands, her broken finger nails, were happy. Lois was happy. As she stood and scoured them that night with lemon juice and soap and pumice stone she liked their looks better than she ever remembered liking them before; and she was planning an assault upon more shellac the next night.

It took her a week of busy evenings to remove all the foreign substance from that mahogany table; and by that time she had read so much on the subject of finishing woods that she was almost prepared to set up a cabinet shop of her own. By the time she had oiled the top of her table so that, for all its soft luster, it was impervious to hot dishes set upon it, and had "French finished" the base, many a cabinet-maker would have been willing to give her the union rate of wages each day for her work. But, the insurance business being rather profitable, she has not given it up; she has merely become a connoisseur in old furniture, and she is gradually replacing the worthy, uninteresting, commonplace pieces that furnished her apartment with lovely old ones restored by her to their pristine beauty.

"It's not so much the furniture, though of course that counts for something," says Lois. "It's the fun of doing something with my hands—you can't imagine how I enjoy it. It is as much of a delight to me as the discovery that they could learn Latin and philosophy probably was to the pioneer women collegians. If Alexander hadn't been a stupid person, with a limited imagination, he need never have gone about sighing for new worlds to conquer. He had only to take some undeveloped faculty and give it a chance, and he would have enjoyed it more

than conquering all the tribes in the East. He should have taken to vegetable gardening, or clay modeling, or something like that, and he would have died a happy and contented man."

Gardening, indeed, has furnished many a woman who would otherwise have known nothing of the all-sufficing delight of manual labor with her initiation into its joys. The farmer's wife, whose hands are busy with a dozen tasks from dawn till bedtime, may not be enthusiastic over the mere toil of digging, planting, weeding, spraying, pruning, and all the rest of the processes of the garden. But the woman whose hands have never had a more plebeian work than playing the harp or piano will bring to horticultural occupation an untouched fund of enthusiasm.

"At first," says Elizabeth, not of the German, but of a New Jersey, garden, "I pretended to myself that what I loved about my garden was the flowers. Well, of course I do love them. But chiefly I love to do things with my hands, and I shall never cease to feel gratitude to the gardener who replied to my rebuke about his neglect of the place by giving instant and somewhat impertinent notice. It was in the late spring. Things had not been transplanted from the hot beds and cold frames into their places; the hot beds had not been watered or weeded. It required divination to tell the asters from the well-sprouted nuisances and pests.

"Although the gardener's manner

left me no alternative but to send him off the place posthaste, I hadn't expected to take the situation myself. I telephoned into town to the agency for a new man; they said they 'would try' to send me one the next day. In the meantime there were the green things spindling along to disaster for the need of transplanting and watering. I decided that it was an emergency in which I should do something myself. I armed myself with a garden guide—I always read the lovely literature on the subject of the garden—a big hat, a pair of gloves, an apron, a trowel, a watering can, and a basket.

"Somehow, I began to have a sense of joyous adventure as I proceeded. At the end of fifteen minutes I had discarded the gloves; at the end of half an hour, the hat. The rest of the paraphernalia I retained. I watered and I weeded, I carried tender little shoots to their places in the beds and borders,



"I watered and I weeded."

I made lovely wet puddles for them, and I pressed the earth over the roots in the way the garden guide advised.

"When Harry came home that night I was sunburned as to the back of my neck, disgraceful as to my fingers, lame as to my spine—but, oh, how triumphant I felt! Every one of my ten digits was ready to caper in thanksgiving for the day's activity they had enjoyed. We've never had a gardener since. And, though I say it who shouldn't, we have the prettiest garden and the best vegetables in all our suburb.

"Furthermore, I have a new understanding of Harry. Until I began to be a besotted gardener, it struck me as a sheer perversity that he, a well-to-do lawyer, should enjoy acting like a grimy mechanic. His notion of a happy holiday was to get into the garage and take the automobile to pieces, appearing dilatorily at luncheon, looking—oh, looking unspeakable! My idea of the car was that it was something to ride about the country in; his idea seemed to be that it was a clever mechanical device to be experimented with, to the great detriment of his clothes and hands. And many and many is the time when he has begged to be allowed to spend a holiday tinkering in his tool shed instead of dashing brilliantly up to the country club and having tea with a lot of people.

"Until I came to know the satisfaction of digging in the earth with my hands, of clipping grassy borders, of mixing wood ashes and leaf mold from the swamp, even of picking bugs—until I knew these joys, Harry's diversions seemed to me mere perversities designed chiefly to annoy me. But now I understand him. I understand that all his ancestors, from the original cave man down to his farmer grandfather, are in him, demanding that he shall use his hands; and his amateur mechanics and carpentry are his response to that demand of theirs; fortunately

for me, I dare say! Otherwise the cave man might burst forth in some less desirable form. Just as I myself was in a fair way to become a mere bridge fiend and gadabout because I was neglecting all my ancestresses in me, who had to do so much with their busy hands that the hands of their descendants to the last generation will need an activity."

There may be something in Elizabeth's atavistic view of the matter. We all came of forbears who could use their hands, and did use them; who supported life by their use as the busy agents of gradually developing intellects. But in our generation the claims of the mind have taken, rightly enough, precedence; and, though there are still vast armies of drudges, most of us in the great middle class of society and finance live rather by our brains than by our brawn. And it would be sheer nonsense for us women of that class all to return to primitive industry in order that our atrophying manual powers should have a chance; not even to win the gratitude of our too long idle fingers is it worth while for us to make our own soap, spin our own wool, braid our own carpets, can our own vegetables, or play at dairying, like poor Marie Antoinette. But there is not one of us who cannot discover, upon experiment, some manual occupation that will not be merely a means of manual exercise, like clasping and unclasping our fingers, but a means of producing something doubly worth while in the world—worth while for the pleasure its production would give its producer, and worth while for the sake of the product itself.

After all, perhaps it is not so very necessary to plead for a literal interpretation of that scriptural passage. For the work of our hands seems to be already rather completely sanctified to the workers, if the signs of sanctification are joyful satisfaction and innocent pride.





The School Bully

By Edith Summers Updegraff

Author of "The Primrose Party Dress," "The Mysterious Lavender Notes," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. PUGSLEY

FOR patience sake!"

It was the most violent exclamation that New England Theodosia was in the habit of using. So it caused me to turn from the mirror, where I was parting my hair carefully down the middle in an exact line with my nose, to see Theo kneeling with her back to me on the threshold of the clothes closet, tugging violently and apparently without result at something on the floor.

"What's the matter?"

"My slippers—the nice, new, knitted ones that Aunt Amanda sent me last week for my birthday—they're glued, or something, to the floor! Oh, Betty, they're *nailed* with millions of big nails! I'll never be able to get them up—and, anyway, they're ruined."

There were tears in Theodosia's voice.

"It's that Maud Mullins and her gang again!" I exclaimed indignantly as I examined the slippers. "What's this?"

I extracted a folded white something from the toe of one of them, unfolded it, and read:

"Did its mamma make it some nice little blue booties to keep its tootsies warm? Well, den it wad, too!"

"Oh, piffle! I don't see anything especially clever about that kind of a practical joke," I snapped disgustedly. "What you ought to do, Theo, is to get up a *good* one on her—one that'll show her up as the big, clumsy, mutton-headed smarty that she really is—one that'll

make her wonder what it was that hit her."

"But the Bible says love your enemies and turn the other cheek," objected Theodosia.

"Theo, how often have I got to repeat to you that those principles that the Sunday-school teacher taught you will *not* apply in this wicked world? They especially won't apply to new girls in boarding school who are being teased and worried and bullied to death by a pack of smart Alecks who think they own the whole place because they happen to have entered the year before. Believe *me*, Theodosia, if you go into that business of turning the other cheek you soon won't have any cheeks left to turn. They'll be all smit, or smitten, or smote, or whatever it is, off."

"Perhaps you're right," admitted Theo, looking dolefully at the anchored slippers, and reaching for her kimono from the back of the door. "Oh, Betty, look here at what they've done! I can't get into my kimono."

Sure enough, she couldn't get into her kimono, for the simple reason that the opening of the sleeves had been stitched across—double-stitched on the housekeeper's lock-stitch sewing machine. The poor child began to cry.

You see, it was our first term at St. Agatha's, and Theodosia, my cousin and roommate, was having rather more than her share of first-term troubles. Theo happens to be one of those girls who are just a little too good for this world



"But the Bible says love your enemies and turn the other cheek," objected Theodosia.

—awfully strong on sense of duty, and not at all strong on sense of humor. Now, a girl can't be the least bit inclined that way without the whole school knowing it rather sooner than later and acting accordingly. That's how Theo came to be, almost from the day of her arrival, the unfortunate butt of so many practical jokes.

The leader of the practical-joke gang was one Maud Mullins, a big, fat, bold-faced girl, who thought she was a beauty, and wore sloppy clothes that she called "artistic." She lived across the hall from us in a room called "the Corner Grocery," because she got so many hampers from home that her

closet shelves were always packed full in spite of the fact that she spent almost all her time in eating.

It was this constant eating, I suppose, that made her so fat. Her fatness worried her terribly, and she was always taking "reducing" exercises to get rid of it. Almost any afternoon if you popped suddenly into her room without knocking you'd find her stretching her short, pudgy arms into the air, or jiggling up and down first on one

foot and then on the other, or trying vainly to reach over and touch her toes without bending her knees, at the same time munching a chocolate cream, or a piece of fruit cake, or a cracker-and-cheese sandwich.

She was a typical school bully, brazen, conceited, and snobbish, the kind of girl who feels herself immensely superior because she's able to bulldoze the spirit all out of some poor, little, frightened freshman. The worst of it was that Maud was so good at her game that she had almost the whole school buffaloed. Her father was a wealthy banker—immensely wealthy, it was whispered around. And endless talk

circulated through the school concerning Maud's frequent visits to Europe, Maud's brilliant social future, Maud's "artistic" gowns, said to be designed especially for her by a noted Parisian artist. It was whispered with bated breath that she had once known a count—a real Italian count. Think of it!

But somehow or other these things that dazzled the other girls so much failed to impress me. I only knew that with money, foreign trips, "artistic" clothes, Italian counts, and all, Maud Mullins was vulgar and mean and cruel, and that she was making my roommate's life at St. Agatha's anything but one grand, sweet song.

Already the poor kid's toothbrush had been dipped in glue, her powder box filled with soot—procured goodness knows where—her shoes relieved of their buttons, and her best Sunday dress, a fashionable taupe charmeuse, of all its hooks and eyes. It seemed to me about time that something was done.

That same evening another pleasant little incident occurred to contribute to Theodosia's happiness and peace of mind.

During study hour—about nine o'clock, I should say—a girl whom neither of us knew came to our door and said that Miss Phipps was wanted downstairs in the principal's office. Theodosia wondered, but went with her head held high, conscious of moral rectitude, for she knew that she hadn't busted any rules.

She had scarcely disappeared when another girl, also quite unknown to me, tapped at the door, and said that I was wanted in room 87.

I started out to find room 87, which I judged, from the way in which the rooms were numbered, must be on the top floor. To the top floor I hied me, but I could find no room 87. There was a room 86, away up at the end of the long corridor known as "Pie Alley," "and further there were none."

Concluding that it was one of their usual tricks, I turned back, went downstairs, and reached our room, to find Theodosia standing outside the door, with her forehead pressed against it,

sobbing her soul out to the cold, unresponsive panel. Approaching nearer, I saw with astonishment that her hair and clothes were dripping wet. There was not another sign of life in the long corridor, but I thought I caught the sound of suppressed giggling from "the Corner Grocery" opposite.

"Theo, whatever in the world has happened to you?" I cried, grabbing her by the arm. "And why are you soaking wet? And what are you standing out here for?"

Before she could open her mouth to answer all these questions a door half-way down the hall opened, and Miss Pringle, the teacher in charge of our corridor, came bearing majestically down upon us.

"Young ladies, why are you not in your rooms at work? You certainly are aware that this is the study hour." Then, noticing Theo's bedraggled appearance: "Miss Phipps, how did you get into this condition?"

Now, in any school the worst crime that can be committed is tattling to teachers. If a girl can't hold her own without the aid of a teacher she's considered a poor, weak vessel indeed. So the answer that Miss Pringle got from Theodosia was:

"I—I fell into the bathtub."

"You fell into the bathtub! What were you doing around a bathtub at this hour in the evening? And why don't you go into your room?"

"It—it's locked," stammered Theo.

"Well, haven't you got the key?" snapped Miss Pringle, in exasperation.

"No, Miss Pringle; it locked itself while I was away. It must be a spring lock."

Theodosia knew, and I knew, and Miss Pringle knew that it wasn't a spring lock.

"Miss Watson, where were you when all this was happening?" inquired Miss Pringle, turning on me a fishy and suspicious eye.

"I went upstairs to return some history notes to a girl," I lied glibly.

"Without permission?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Miss Watson, go down to Agnes,

the chambermaid, and ask her to come and open the door with her pass-key."

I fled along the corridor, got Agnes, and returned to find Theo and Miss Pringle standing just where I had left them. Agnes unlocked the door, while Miss Pringle said icily: "I shall be obliged to take two points in observance of rules from the monthly record of



"Young ladies, why are you not in your rooms at work?"

each of you," and sailed back to her stronghold.

As soon as we were safe in the room, with the door closed, I took some blankets from the bed and spread them over the radiator to warm.

"We were mighty lucky to get off as easily as we did," I said to Theo. "If Miss Pringle hadn't been tired, or writing a letter to her gentleman friend, or reading an interesting novel, she would have taken time to inquire further into this little business. Now, Theo, what's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

"Well," answered Theo, peeling her wet shirt waist from her shivering

shoulders, "I went downstairs to the principal's office, and found it dark and locked. Then, of course, I knew it was one of their jokes. I came upstairs, and found this room locked, too. I knocked softly at the door, and called through the keyhole, thinking, of course, that you were inside. As I had my lips to the keyhole, there came a sudden splash, and I found myself drenched with cold water. Somebody inside had emptied a pitcher of water over me through the transom. That's all. Then you came—and Miss Pringle."

At this I ran to one of the windows which was standing wide open.

"The fire escape!" I exclaimed. "They got out that way! And I'm dead sure it was Maud Mullins and her gang again. I heard giggling in 'the Corner Grocery' as I came along the hall. Theodosia Pendleton Davenport Phipps, if you don't pretty soon do something to protect yourself and get back at those hyenas, I'll have to butt in and do something for you."

"Don't you dare!" exclaimed Theodosia, looking me proudly in the eye as I wrapped the warm blankets around her. "I'm able to take care of myself; I'll do whatever I think I ought to do."

"All right; have it your own way, Theo. But if at Christmas I have to take you back to your loving parents a raving maniac, or a driveling idiot, or a mangled corpse, or whatever combination of noun and adjective those fiends in human shape turn you into, don't blame me."

"I won't," promised Theo as she rolled resignedly into bed.

For several days after this there was a cessation of hostilities. Maud seemed to be deeply engrossed in something else. Aside from the fact that she no longer bothered Theo, she became even more objectionable than usual. She took to wearing every day the costumes that she had formerly reserved for special occasions—clinging, skimp-skirted "creations" of pale green, clouded amethyst, Roman gold, and other "artistic" colors, supplemented by quantities of barbaric jewelry and endless

strings of beads. She reeked of perfumes, her mouth took on a sentimental droop, and her nose seemed to be tip-tilted several degrees higher in the air than formerly. On two separate occasions—once loitering in a secluded walk of the grounds, once overflowing a music stool in one of the practice rooms—I came upon her reading what seemed to be some sort of a letter or note. Both times she crumpled the paper up in her hand and became very busy doing something else. I began to wonder what was up.

Before many days had passed I found out. One hazy, golden October afternoon I was wandering alone in the grounds, watching the red-and-yellow leaves fluttering down through the pale sunshine, and getting quite poetic about it, when, making a sharp turn in the path, I caught sight of Maud's ample figure, enveloped in a long, loose pongee silk coat, a few yards ahead of me. She had her broad back to me, and I stood still and watched. Beside her grew a big, old walnut tree, with several large holes in the trunk, where branches had rotted away. I saw Maud put her hand into one of these holes, draw out a piece of folded paper, and stow it away in her coat pocket. At the same time she took from her other pocket another piece of folded paper, put it into the hole from which she had taken the first piece, and hurried away.

I stole quietly up to the tree, plunged my arm into the hole, and felt for the paper. "All's fair in war!" I said to myself as I fished it out. "If this gives me and Theo a handle against her, so much the better."

This is what was in the note:

DEAR ERIC: You are a bad, flattering boy to say all those nice things about me. You know you don't believe half of them. Still, it's nice to have somebody to flatter one. I



"I saw Maud draw out a piece of folded paper, and stow it away in her coat pocket."

wish I could write you a long letter; but I am either kept busy or watched all the time in this horrible prison school. Be sure to write to me again to-morrow. I live for your letters. MAUD.

"Yo, ho!" I chortled as I folded up the note and put it back into the hole. "Our Maud has been and gone and got herself a lover—a romantic one, who hides notes in tree trunks. That explains all this languishing and top-loftiness and wearing of best clothes. Oh, Migrating Mike, what a chance! What can't we do to her now!"

I started off on the run, crazy to tell the good news to Theo; but on the way I had a change of heart. Theodosia, I knew, as soon as I took time to think about it, would never appreciate the full juiciness of the situation. What was worse, she would probably refuse to make any use of it. She would stand up and tell me to my face that Maud's love affair was none of our business, that we had no right to interfere even

though she *had* treated us meanly. She would do the righteous, turn-the-other-cheek act, and spoil everything. No, it would be best to keep it from Theodosia for the present, and get a little more information before making any plans.

So I waited. The next afternoon, about an hour before the time at which I had discovered Maud the day before, I hied me to the spot, felt in the hole, and found—yes, a note from “Eric.” It was written in a plain backhand, with heavy downstrokes, and read:

DEAREST MAUD: At last the opportunity has arrived. Meet me at the foot of the west fire escape to-morrow—Sunday—night at eleven o'clock. Be sure not to disappoint me, for this is a matter of the greatest importance. In desperate haste and desperate love, your own,
ERIC.

I carefully refolded the note, put it back where I got it, and strolled back slowly through the rustling, leaf-strewn alleys, debating what to do. I decided not to tell Theodosia even yet. I would keep the juicy secret to myself at least until eleven o'clock on Sunday night. In the meantime, I would meditate on how to make the most of it.

Then, on Sunday, something quite unexpected happened that almost made me forget about Maud's lover.

We were just finishing dinner. Now, the finish of the Sunday dinner at St. Agatha's is a long-sustained and deeply agonizing affair, full of nervous suspense and tense anxiety. It is this way: There are eleven girls and a teacher at each table. After every meal except Sunday dinner each table gets up and goes out as it finishes. After Sunday dinner, however, the whole school, some two hundred in all, must rise in one solid body and file out of the dining room. You can easily imagine that the carrying out of this performance requires a lot of physical and mental agony on the part of both pupils and teachers, and especially on the part of Doctor Higginbotham, our principal, whose duty it is to rise at the psychological moment and thus give the signal for the grand general exodus.

By the time the Sunday ice cream

begins to melt away before us, Doctor Higgs' classic features have taken on an uneasy look. By the time the fast eaters have finished, a slight flush appears on her rather prominent cheek bones. By the time everybody but the slow eaters has finished, the slight flush has become a deep, embarrassed crimson, and she is visibly torn between a desperate desire to crane her neck hither and thither—thus keeping track of the progress of the slow eaters—and an equally desperate desire to maintain her accustomed dignity and calm. She always compromises between these two warring impulses by trying to make her eyes do the work of her neck, and the result is weird.

We were at this last stage of the Sunday-dinner game. The room was so still that you could have heard a hair ribbon drop. The fast eaters were almost dead with waiting. Theodosia, the slowest eater probably that the world has ever known, had just gulped a spoonful of her ice cream, and was preparing to resign half of it uneaten rather than keep all the two hundred waiting any longer, and Doctor Higgs was stirring uneasily in her seat, preparatory to giving the rising signal, when all at once the door opened, a timid little housemaid pointed to a certain table, and an immense fat man with hanging, beefsteak cheeks, dressed in a plaid suit of store clothes, a scarlet tie, and a green plush hat, came rolling across the room to where Maud Mullins was sitting, grabbed her around the neck, and gave her a smack that all two hundred of us heard quite distinctly.

“Well, how's the gal?” he inquired, in a voice plainly audible throughout the room. “I thought I'd just blow in and give you a bit of a surprise, Maudie. Business's rather slack these days since everybody started boycotting meat.”

But at this point Doctor Higgs discreetly gave the rising signal, and the rest was lost in the scraping of many chairs and the shuffling of many feet.

But news, especially that kind of news, travels fast in boarding schools.

We hadn't been out of the dining room ten minutes before everybody in the school knew that Maud's father was not a banker, as Maud had given out, but that he kept the butcher shop at Hogg's Corners, Indiana, and that he had made great personal sacrifices in order to send Maud to a finishing school and to fit her out in the garb required by her fastidious tastes; which garb, by the way, she manufactured herself during vacations. Nothing else was talked about all Sunday afternoon. The whole of St. Agatha's, the Snobbish, fairly buzzed. I caught myself almost beginning to feel friendly toward her, but I remembered how she had treated Theo, and refrained.

At supper both Maud and her father were found to be absent. It was rumored on authority that the old man had decided to stay overnight, although Maud had tried hard to make him take the afternoon train home. And that, rather than exhibit him to the school at supper, she had got permission to go with him to a restaurant in the town. The buzzing went on.

When the lights were put out at ten o'clock, the latest bulletin telegraphed from room to room was to the effect that Maud's father had been put to sleep in the guest room, which was the room immediately below ours; and that if Maud did not spirit him away on an early train we would get another chance to see

him—plaid suit, red tie, green plush hat, and all—at breakfast.

At ten minutes of eleven, I was in my bed and apparently asleep. Through our room was Maud's shortest way to the west fire escape. At about five minutes of eleven, as I expected, the door opened noiselessly, and a large figure, wrapped in a long cloak, softly crossed to the open window, slowly hoisted itself over the sill, and disappeared. Theodosia slept sweetly.

I waited until I thought Maud would be well started on her trip down the fire



"Oh, Eric, Eric, save me!" she cried beseechingly.

escape. Then I crawled out of bed, slipped into my kimono, and stuck my head out of the window.

The moon was rising, but was still very low in the sky, and the grounds below were in deep shadow. Its rays, however, lighted the upper part of the fire escape and the ponderous figure of Maud cautiously navigating down the steep and narrow steps.

All at once a window below me was opened, and a large head thrust out.

"Maud!" came in a bellowing, peremptory voice from the large head. "Maud!" And again: "Maud!"

Maud stopped at the sound of her name, shrunk into the shadow, and remained silent like a dog "playing dead."

The window below opened wider; the big head was followed by a ponderous body, and soon there were two large figures on the fire escape instead of one.

"I'll learn you, Maud, to go eloping at eleven o'clock at night with a strange man you ain't never seen! Yes, by golly! That was what the note said that was pushed under my door: 'Elopin' with a man she ain't never seen!' And to think of your old dad skimp-in' and savin' every penny to give you a education like the best of 'em gets! Maud—Maud, come back here, I say!"

But the fair Maud answered nothing. When she saw her parent beginning to descend the fire escape after her, she had at once realized that her one salvation lay in reaching the ground ahead of him, and she was now scrambling down with remarkable agility for one who admitted to a hundred and seventy-three pounds.

To complicate the situation, Maud and her father were no longer alone with the moon and the rest of the scenery. At the first note of pa's thunderous bellowing, windows had begun to open. As the bellowing continued and increased in volume, more windows opened, until that whole side of the building was one combination of tittering mouth and open eye and ear.

Still Maud continued to descend. Still pa continued to bellow forth threats and reproaches as he laboriously followed.

Then suddenly Maud stopped.

At first I could not see why she had stopped. Then, as my eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, I perceived that the ladder from the second story to the ground was missing.

"Eric!" called Maud, in a voice of wild desperation. "Eric!" And again: "Eric!" But no Eric replied.

Suddenly Maud gave a gulp of relief and joy, and stretched out her arms. "Oh, Eric, Eric, save me!" she cried beseechingly.

I followed the direction of her arms, and, sure enough, I was able to discern the figure of a man standing against a tree, perhaps ten feet away.

"Eric, save me!" entreated Maud again. But that good-for-nothing Eric neither spoke nor stirred.

"Don't you do nothing of the sort, young man!" shouted pa, rather unnecessarily it seemed. "A nice young feller you are, hangin' around a school puttin' notions into the heads of innocent young gals!"

Just at that moment somebody flashed the light of a dark lantern on Eric's face and form.

The subdued titter that had animated the windows burst into a crescendo of giggles and shrieks. Pa gave first an incredulous, then a disgusted, grunt, and began to climb back to where he had come from. Poor Maud still sat huddled on the fire escape, struck dumb with surprise and disillusionment.

What the dark lantern had revealed to view was a stuffed figure with a hideous false face and a flowing black wig. There was an inscription in large letters across the figure's breast, whose simple legend read: "I am Eric!"

When I had shrieked away the first richness of that prince of jokes, I thought, with sudden self-accusation, of Theodosia. I had been so interested that I had forgotten to waken her, and here she had missed it all!

I turned from the window, and faced her. She was holding a dark lantern.

"Oh, Betty," she exclaimed, before I could say a word, "I'm sorry I did it! My conscience is troubling me terribly."

SOME REFLECTIONS OF AN OLD MAID



By
**Hildegarde
Lavender**

Author of

"On Second Wives,"

"Ten Minutes Late," etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY H. VON S. LUCAS

JEMIMA always drops in upon me on that day "at home" when the winds and the floods prevent less hardy human beings from appearing in more personal form than a pasteboard card. She comes early on these occasions, settles herself comfortably before the fire, within easy reach of the sandwiches and cakes, drinks innumerable cups of tea, and frees her mind of many of the things that burden it for the rest of the winter. Jemima is forty-odd, stalwart and ruddy, with keen, bright eyes that see most of the amusing incidents occurring within their range of vision; and I always welcome that winter gale which keeps other people away, and sends her in to me, sparkling with rain-drops, rimed with snow, blown and breathless from the hurricane, and altogether tingling with life.

Last Friday I heard her disencumbering herself of umbrella, rubbers, and mackintosh in the hall, and making a few breezy comments on the weather to Augustine. Then she appeared, fairly exuding ozone, in the sitting room, where the small tea table was intimately spread. I interrupted my directions to Norah, who stood in the dining-room doorway, looking much perturbed, to give her greeting.

"Go on with your business," said

Jemima, with a discriminating glance among the sandwiches, which resulted in the choice of a peanut one. "Go on! I'm here for the afternoon."

"I was only telling Norah," I explained, "that the little tailor around the corner must have Dick's dress clothes pressed and home by six, whether he can or not! Tell him he must, Norah. Mr. Brown must have them. There's some political dinner somewhere," I explained to Jemima, "and Dick has to be there by seven.—Wait a minute," I added to Norah, "I'll telephone him myself—if you will excuse me," I added to Jemima.

"Help yourself!" replied Jemima easily.

"He's had his telephone took out," announced Norah, in regard to the dilatory tailor.

"Well, then, Norah, there's nothing else for it but for you to go around there again, and take the clothes away from him!" I said in desperation. "Pressed or unpressed, we've got to have them!"

Norah gave an expressive glance toward the storm beyond the drawn curtains, and withdrew, "warnings" foretold in every curve of her redundant figure.

"Please, Mrs. Brown," announced

Augustine, in an undertone, "Master Dickie hasn't come in from school yet, an' it's long after four. An' Miss Helena won't take off her wet shoes an' stockings."

"Jemima," I apologized, "I am ashamed of all this domestic turmoil. But will you excuse me for a few seconds while I see to my obstreperous daughter, and telephone Dickie's school?"

"Go ahead," replied Jemima com-

thought of my own peaceful lot! And, incidentally, I'm sending up a devout thanksgiving to Heaven because I did not, years ago, accept my dear Brother William's invitation to pass my lonely life with his family. If I had accepted William's well-meant invitation, Alberta, do you know what I should have been doing this afternoon, instead of toasting my feet before your fire, drinking your excellent tea, and philosophizing idly?"



"Go ahead," replied Jemima comfortably—exultingly even.

fortably—exultingly even. "Go ahead. This is nuts to me."

I did not pause to ask the reason for this inhuman remark. The sounds from the room where my daughter refused to remove her shoes and stockings forbade delay. But when, at the end of a feverish five minutes, I dropped exhausted into my chair behind the tea table again, I asked Jemima what she meant.

"My dear Alberta," said Jemima, "I'm not an inhuman brute, gloating over your difficulties in the rôle of wife and mother. I'm only a philosophic old maid, enjoying, for a second, the

I said that I did not know.

"I should have been haranguing the little tailor around the corner about Brother William's dress clothes—unless I happened to be in the laundry, pressing them myself! I should have been struggling with my niece's bad temper, and with my nephew's failure to come home from school. I should have been enduring most of the hardships of domestic existence without any of its compensations. I tell you," cried Jemima, warming to her subject, "every day of my life I am grateful to Providence that I wasn't an old maid in the good old self-abnegating days,

when an old maid's niche in the world was the drafty side of her married brother's or sister's fireplace! There are even days," she went on, "when I see cause for gratitude in the fact that I am not only of this era in the world's history, but that I am an old maid!"

"Oh," said I, rather crossly, "it isn't fair to condemn a whole state, just because of certain small drawbacks in it. It's foolish to see the flies in the amber, and to lose sight of the amber itself. Of course, there are certain little pin pricks of trial in the ordinary domestic life, but, after all——"

"Oh, yes, I know!" interrupted Jemima, in a bored voice. "I've been paying William and his wife a visit. And there's nothing you can tell me about the richness of married life, the fulness of the parental life, the greatness of the task of mothers, the comparative worthlessness of all other tasks! William's wife told me all about it. I am quite well aware," went on Jemima, a little less bitterly, as she silently took her third cup of tea, "that Florence Nightingale wasn't worth a hill of beans compared to Mrs. Perkins, playing bridge in the apartment over you, because Florence Nightingale didn't have three very spoiled, badly brought-up children, and Mrs. Perkins has! I know that Mrs. Callanan around on Jones Street, with a baby a year, and a black eye a week from Callanan's drunken Saturday-night fist, is doing a glorious work in the world that makes Clara Barton's seem like child's play! I——"

"Stop, Jemima!" I commanded. "You can't make me believe that William's wife talked any such rubbish as you are basely imputing to her. William's wife is not a subject for the insane asylum."

"I admit that William's wife did not carry her remarks to the logical, the inevitable, conclusion to which I have carried them. But if William's wife had proceeded along the relentless path of reasoning, as I have done for her, this is where she must have brought up! My dear, William's wife pitied me—obviously pitied me!"

I tried to hide the fact that I had often been guilty of the insolence of pitying Jemima. I tried to look as if I had never said smugly: "Poor, dear Jemima! What a pity she doesn't marry! What a barren, dull life she leads, with all her energy, all her ability!"

"And," pursued the determined Jemima, "William's wife was guilty of no more than all the rest of you comfortable, self-satisfied wives! You know, Alberta, that every one of you is guilty of pitying every unmarried woman whom you happen to like enough to wish well!"

"Suppose we do!" I accepted the challenge boldly. "Suppose we do? Aren't we right, after all? I'm not talking now about your exceptional women, your Florence Nightingales and your Jane Addamses, and such; but about the ordinary unmarried woman. And I'm not comparing her with Mrs. Callanan, of Jones Street, but with the ordinary married woman—the woman of her own class, her own ability. Do you mean to tell me that you don't think the married woman's lot the fuller one? The happier one? Why shouldn't we be sorry that our dear friends have missed the happiness that we know? Why shouldn't we wish that they had the assurance of comfortable, cared-for old age, such as we have? No, Jemima, I will not admit that it's altogether smug self-satisfaction, altogether blind egotism, narrow inability to see beyond our own front yards, that makes us pity our unmarried women friends. I will not admit it."

"For the sake of argument," said Jemima, "I am willing to grant you a few things. I am willing to grant you that love is a great and enriching experience; but you, on the other hand, must allow that to be an old maid is not to be necessarily ignorant of love. It is only to be ignorant of certain of its satisfactions. As for your comfortable, cared-for old age—that's a cowardly argument, Alberta, and it doesn't appeal to me. Besides, it's an extremely uncertain argument. Marriage doesn't insure that children will live to maturity.

Still less does it insure that they will care for their parents all their lives long. If marriage insured any such thing as that, half the population of our country poorhouses and almshouses would be living in their children's homes."

Unfortunately, *Jemima* and I had visited a country poorhouse together last summer, and the statistics of that institution bore her out only too grimly. But I was firm with her.

"There is no joy," I informed her didactically, "for the average woman, without a great mission in life, equal to affectionate companionship with her husband——"

"Do you happen to have the divorce statistics of our happy land near by?" inquired *Jemima* derisively. "What gives you the trustful notion that marriage insures affectionate companionship with a husband to any woman?"

"And there is no experience so enriching, so ennobling, to the average woman," I went on, disdaining to answer *Jemima's* gibes about divorce—besides, I judged it best not to attempt to do so—"as motherhood."

"Oh, well, have it your own way," said *Jemima* wearily. "I dare say you're right enough in a sense. But you must admit my point of view also. If you say to me that an ideal marriage is an ideal state, I admit it. And that is all that you do say, mind you! You never mention the marriages that find their way to the hideous divorce court; or the marriages that would find their way there but for pride, or poverty, or regard for children—or the ignorance of wives! You never mention the marriages that, though no divorce threatens them, are no more ideal comradeships than the bookkeeper's relation with his employer is an ideal comradeship; but are just dull matters of habit."

"And if you talk ideal marriage to me, I have the right to talk ideal spinsterhood to you. I have the right to talk of minds alert to a whole world of interests instead of to a small household. I have the right to talk of friendships making up in breadth and variety for the depths of that one great

companionship of which you speak. I have the right to talk of brains and abilities expanding in congenial work, instead of fretting against the exacting limitations of a small home. I tell you," cried *Jemima*, in sudden, angry conclusion, "I am tired of the pity of those who care for me, and the contempt of those who do not! For the sake of tradition, for the sake of the continuance of the race, I grant you the ennoblement, the enrichment, the satisfaction of which you talk. But you'll have to grant me something in turn. You'll have to grant me ten thousand little, petty, selfish satisfactions."

"You don't know what a source of pleasure it is to me to earn my own living! Of course, I admit, wholeheartedly, that you and William's wife, and the rest of married women—except the idle rich—earn their livings, too. But it's a satisfaction to have one's wages paid in the coin of the realm instead of in 'keep' and a few extras, as is the case with my sister-in-law."

"It is an immense satisfaction to me to do what I please with the money that I earn—to 'blow it in' on expensive opera seats if I feel inclined, to take my tea in a gilded hostelry, when the mood is on me, to be recklessly extravagant in the matter of a new hat when I want to be! It is an unalloyed delight to me to think that next week I shall tell dear old William, who is growing gray-haired in the effort to make a small professorial salary bring up a large family in a thoroughly 'nice' way—to think that I shall tell him that I will send the girls to college!"

"It's a comfort—a base, selfish comfort—to me, to reflect when I go to bed at night that I shan't have to wake at five to feed a baby, or at twelve to give medicine to the croupy one of the twins! It's a source of mild satisfaction to me, my dear Alberta, that I do not have the problem of Helena's disposition to wrestle with—as you do! And that I don't have to waste valuable brain force in struggling with the little tailor around the corner on the mighty subject of a dear Dick's dress clothes."

"I'm glad that I can sit up as late as I



"I can't keep it any longer. Guess who's going to be married."

please to-night to finish the German novel I am reading, and that I shall not pay for my late hours by being cross to any beloved companion or children in the morning! I am glad that I have had the time and inclination to keep up my German, which you have utterly dropped. I'll admit that a foreign language is not so glorious a way of enlarging one's soul as by having children; but it helps, Alberta, it helps! I'm glad that I have time to be an active socialist, whereas William's wife hasn't had time to learn what socialism is. Oh, I'm glad of a number of things in connection with being an old maid!"

"You remind me," I said, "of the American Indians, who once esteemed as more valuable than their heritage of woods and fields, pieces of red calico and strings of blue beads." I was rather pleased with that saying. It

seemed to me a neat epitome of the discussion.

"Alberta dear, a figure of speech, though useful, is not argument. Besides, I have already told you that I was willing to concede the great advantages of existence to the married women, provided they would only recognize the small advantages that accrue to spinsterhood. And between you and me and our old friend, the gatepost, I don't think it is the lack of the great things for which the married women pity the single ones. It is not the lack of soul-searching, soul-plowing experiences; it's the lack of some one to lock up the house at night! It's not the lack of the great discipline of motherhood that they deplore for me; it's the lack of a pretty little doll with pink ribbons to send to dancing school on Saturday afternoons."

Jemima fell silent again, and I, too, was quiet. I was listening with half an ear to the conversation of Norah and Augustine in the hall, on the subject of the little tailor. And I was also trying to determine, from the sounds in the playroom, whether Dickie was maltreating his sister, or vice versa.

"I've had married women say to me," Jemima went on, "that they were sorry for me, or for some other spinster, not because she had missed happiness, comfort, the common lot of normal joy, but because she had missed 'the experience of life.' Maybe so. But—there is an experience of need, as well as an experience of plenty. There's an experience of want as well as of fullness. You know, I cannot but believe that the beggar outside the banquetting hall has experience as poignant, as searching, as the rich men gorging at the feast. So much for the larger, deeper aspect of the matter. And for the trifling side of it, believe me, Alberta—there is a lot to be said for the comfort of the solitary life!"

Jemima rose to go, and I could think

of no rejoinder except that I supposed a successful life was a successful life, on whatever foundations one built it.

I was engaged in the wifely valet task of putting the buttons in Dick's white waistcoat—his clothes had been providentially rescued from the little tailor—when he called out to me from his shaving glass: "I promised old Hotchkiss not to let it out yet, but, by Jove! I can't keep it any longer. Guess who's going to be married."

"I don't know," I replied, without much animation. Jemima had left me without enthusiasm for mere marriage *per se*.

"Oh, guess! The two you'd least expect it of." Dick gave me a hint.

"Well, of course, old Hotchkiss himself," I said, dutifully trying to please.

"Yes! And——" he encouraged me.

"Oh, I don't know——"

"Jemima Washburn!" shouted Dick triumphantly.

Now, as my small son most reprehensibly says, in spite of much admonition, "wouldn't that jar you!"

The Prisoner

THE night wind steals on vagrant-faring feet
Beyond the lighted circle of my pane;
Old memory voices wake the darkened street,
And sweep my silent heartstrings once again;
The Springtime rides abroad, all blossom-sweet,
In cloud-pale mantle pearled with April rain;
But I, ah, even I,

Sit still and watch their caravans go by.
I hear their brother-hail across the way,
And grope with wistful hands against the gray,
Unyielding prison of the Everyday.

Unseen my bonds to careless mortal eyes,
The peaceful shelter of a quiet home;
What need for dreams of April-shimmered skies,
This heart-wild hungering world-free to roam?
These tear-wet longings that unbidden rise
At song of bird and scent of rain-wet loam?

Yet I, ah, even I,

Crouch dumb the while Spring's caravans go by,
And stretch bound hands while dreamtimes unfulfilled
Go singing down the lanes, all shadow-stilled,
To moon-white, madcap faring, gypsy-willed.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.

THE CREEPING TIDES By Kate Jordan

Author of "Time, the Comedian,"
"The Millionaires," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY MAYO BUNKER



"The tide! The tide! The tide be comin' for some on us. It've some one every time . . . an' it come up. It come nearer . . . and then it spreads. . . . On it comes. With a rush! With a roar! And the claws clutchin' at you. . . Oh, it takes them! And it goes over them. Over them. One roarin' rush!"

"The Tragedy of Nan," by JOHN MASEFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

OUT OF NOWHERE.

ON a dazzling, penetrating afternoon, late in March in the year nineteen hundred and two, Miss Selena Onderdonk was ready for travel and waiting for a visitor. The world outside her windows seemed full of the elves of the air rioting in a cold radiance, high winds, and swirls of gritty dust.

"An edgy, tempery day," she described it in her thoughts, and shivered. "Happy people are subdued to-day. Sad ones are made mad."

Over a warm steamer coat she wore a dust cloak that had been part of every journey for the last eight years. A scoop-shaped black hat was settled straight over her serene eyes and pepper-and-salt hair. Her valise was all she had to remember—her trunk having been sent on the day before—and this stood on a chair beside her. Gloves and handkerchief were spread on her knees. Her open watch was in her hand.

It lacked fully half an hour of the time the visitor had written that she would arrive, but already Miss Onderdonk was nervous. The situation that she found herself in was more unusual than any that had hitherto punctuated her sedate and methodical existence, and had come about in this way: Several weeks before, when an aunt just widowed had persuaded her to decide to make her home with her in San Francisco, Miss Onderdonk had put an advertisement in a New York paper:

Professional woman definitely leaving city will sell furniture of two large rooms in quiet, old neighborhood. Also, small library of well-selected books. Rooms may be rented by the month if desired. Address for ten days, SCHOOL-TEACHER, Box —.

A number of replies had come, but all unsatisfactory; and she had about decided to dispose of her effects by some other method, when, more than a week later, a letter had arrived that made her change her mind. It was from Baltimore, from a woman signing herself "Mrs. Barrett," who gave the general post office as her address. Her

offer to buy the furniture and rent the rooms was generous enough to fan to full flame the business perception that Miss Onderdonk had inherited from the thrifty Dutch fur traders who had been her ancestors. She had immediately written an acceptance.

The next letter from the purchaser had come from Philadelphia, the general post office again being given as the address. This time Miss Onderdonk's curiosity, and the imaginative streak that made her love a story of adventure, were both aroused. The third letter bore the postmark of a small New Jersey town, showing that the peripatetic correspondent was nearing New York; and in this "Mrs. Barrett" stated that she would arrive at Miss Onderdonk's at three o'clock of this present day, pay the money, and take possession.

This, as it developed, had formed an incident with a deepening mysterious flavor, delightful at first, then disturbing. Miss Onderdonk began to think that it did not ring true. It might even be a stupid practical joke. As she waited, she was much like a piece of well-oiled machinery that resented being slightly tiptilted out of its narrow, accustomed gauge by some force it could not even see.

She sat in a really spacious room, a remnant of old-time, temperate opulence. Through the smoke grime on the high ceilings, oleaginous cupids, bearing garlands, were dimly seen. The sarcophaguslike marble mantel was decorated with bunches of heavy grapes, all mutilated. The mirror set into the wall above it had a beautifully carved old frame, a glass cheap and new. Few of the dangling prisms were left on the huge chandeliers. The colonnaded mahogany doors were scarred.

This stately room and two spaces partitioned from it, had been her home for eleven years. They were close to Waverly Place, in Greenwich Village—that one corner of relic-slaughtering New York that retains reminders of the dignified gentility of a century ago. Here Eleventh and Fourth Streets, refusing to be separated by arithmetical arrangement, meet at an unexpected point as

if to shake hands; and Waverly Place sticks its head in where some other street ought to be, for all the world like a village busybody who has to see what is happening around the corner.

The place is two-toned in a most striking way. Along the streets that have survived impairment are lines of sedate, prosperous homes, many of them occupied by descendants of their builders, and as conservatively American as those of any town in New England. But there are other streets where decadent mansions are rented out in bare floors, even rooms, and house a curious, secretive, and constantly shifting population. Here one meets wrecks from strange pasts; walking sorrows with memories for companions; eyes that seem looking into graves; patrician voices often in strange tongues; beautiful hands in old gloves; proud, gray heads under old bonnets. The old village, holding back from the shrieking rush of progress, has an affinity with these aimless, broken beings. They float in and out like spoil on the tides.

It still lacked twenty minutes of the time mentioned in Mrs. Barrett's letter when Miss Onderdonk heard light, hurried steps on the lower stairs. She rose to her feet with a jolt, nervousness vanishing in the pleasant certainty that here was the eccentric purchaser who, without asking a question, had offered her almost twice what she had hoped to get for her household goods. She pulled open the door and peered through her glasses into the dim hallway.

At the turn of the stairs a stranger stood. She was not quite of middle height, slenderly made, and dressed in gray serge. A gray chiffon veil was caught under her chin, making a taut, filmy mask through which came a cloudy impression of dark eyes with an earnest gaze and the blur of a vivid mouth. She came nearer and spoke in a low-pitched voice of most pleasant sound.

"Is this Miss Onderdonk?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" It was the satisfied breath of one tired, hurried. "Then I'll tell the man to fetch up my trunk."

She wheeled again and went rapidly down the one flight of stairs to the front door.

Miss Onderdonk remained where she was, pleasure and query in her face. She had, somehow, come to visualize her correspondent as old or middle-aged, the picture of an ample widow, who would become asthmatically confidential, having particularly occurred to her. To find her young, and of pronounced, though veiled, prettiness, gave the quip of the romantic to the situation, and made Miss Onderdonk begin the little game—born of her imaginativeness and loneliness—that she called “noticing.” To study strangers and arrive at conclusions about them was her favorite distraction on street cars, during ocean voyages, and lonely entrées at matinées.

When Mrs. Barrett returned, Miss Onderdonk's eyes, sharpened by twenty years of watchfulness over hundreds of pupils, flashed eagerly over her and her belongings. She noticed that the serge gown was of a recent, spring fashion, ready-made, and not well fitting; that the small trunk shouldered by the cabman was glaringly new; that newness also shrieked from the yellow suit case carried by Mrs. Barrett; from her hand satchel, russet shoes, gloves, even from the small pigskin purse from which she paid the man—or, rather, overpaid him surprisingly, judging by his explosive thanks.

“I believe she's been very poor, and has just come into money,” was Miss Onderdonk's first deduction.

Her second was that her visitor was nervous, very nervous. When they were alone and both seated, Mrs. Barrett began to tug at her new gray gloves. Her hands trembled so that it was with difficulty that she pulled them off. These small, childish hands next engaged Miss Onderdonk's attention, and intensified the impression of her visitor's recent poverty; they were well cared for, but bore about the nails and knuckles old signs of having toiled hard. There was no wedding ring, no ring of any sort, upon them.

“I hope you'll like the furniture,”

Miss Onderdonk began, in her mild, informing voice. “It was quite a risk to buy it without seeing it.”

“Oh, no,” Mrs. Barrett interrupted; “you described it so thoroughly, you know.”

“But people are so apt to see what belongs to them in a rose-colored light—at least I am. I'm quite foolish about my things. They're all genuinely old. I picked them up at auctions.”

“Too bad you must part with them,” Mrs. Barrett said sympathetically. “I'll pay you now.” She opened the hand satchel and handed Miss Onderdonk what seemed a pamphlet of money. “I counted it and had it all ready. But will you see if it's right, please?”

As Miss Onderdonk obeyed, her head bent, she was conscious that her visitor was looking around with a cautious quiet, lifting and replacing the books on the table in a noiseless way as an intruding servant might have done.

“Absolutely correct. I'll give you a receipt.”

When she turned from the big Sheraton desk, the sheet of paper covered with her fine, Victorian writing fluttering in her hand, she found that Mrs. Barrett had risen and was standing before the mantel looking up at a fine old print of Morland's: “Cottages in Winter.”

“Now,” said Miss Onderdonk, going to her, “this receipt puts you into complete possession. I only hope you'll love this little home as much as I have.”

Mrs. Barrett took the paper silently. Miss Onderdonk could not see through the veil, but she had a feeling that her visitor was fighting tears, that she did not even trust herself to speak. This suspicion scuttled the game of “noticing,” and drops from the maternal well within Miss Onderdonk, which neither celibacy nor a long, tiresome struggle with other people's offspring had been able to parch, warmed her heart for this young and lonely woman.

“Wouldn't you like a cup of tea, my dear?” she asked.

Mrs. Barrett faced her gratefully. “Oh, have you time?”

“I can wait for a train a little later.

I'm only going up the Hudson to-day to stay with my brother. I don't leave for the Pacific coast until next week." She bustled about comfortably. "I'd like a cup of tea myself, and I also want to show you where things are. Now you just sit down—*this* is my favorite," she added, putting her hands on top of a cushioned armchair.

"How cozy—and fat!" Mrs. Barrett exclaimed, and sat down.

There was a great deal of opening and shutting of drawers as Miss Onderdonk spread the cloth and set out the china. She talked continually as she dashed in and out of a screened alcove, mentioning where each thing belonged, extolling the excellent gas stove and the small ice chest.

She noticed that as Mrs. Barrett nodded and replied, she began to make ineffectual movements with her small, nervous hands toward the fastening of her veil; she had become aware that to have the tea she must lift this, yet that she did so unwillingly was evident to the kind, but sharp eyes watching her. Miss Onderdonk put this down to a desire to hide the traces of the secret tears, and when she saw the gray gauze at length unpinned and flung back, she did not look at first at the uncovered face which was being delicately brushed with a handkerchief.

"You'll want to know where to buy things," Miss Onderdonk went on, as she carried the teapot, steaming like a censor, to the table. "I'm leaving you a little book filled with the addresses of my laundress and the tradespeople. I've done my own housework lately—but you'll want a woman to come in, and I know an excellent Swedish girl—"

"No, thanks—no," Mrs. Barrett broke in sharply. Her eyes were down, and she took several moments to fold the veil on her lap; "I'll like to be by myself—at first. I'd like to be kept very busy."

Her gaze shot up at her companion, then quickly aside and down again in a furtive, awkward way that Miss Onderdonk had heretofore noticed only in uncultivated people when out of their ele-

ment—in mothers from the slums when they had come to talk to her about refractory children; in children bred in institutions when brought for the first time in touch with family life; in rough workmen when being cross-examined by some authority. But this knowledge did not explain the same crudeness in Mrs. Barrett, who, though she had known manual toil, and had probably been very poor, was as surely a gentlewoman as Miss Onderdonk's self.

"Do you know New York at all?" Miss Onderdonk asked, as by a gesture she invited her guest to draw up her chair, and then seated herself.

"No," Mrs. Barrett murmured.

"Then probably you don't know the history of this old neighborhood. It's often spoken of by its ancient name of Greenwich Village. It's like bits of Bloomsbury or Chelsea in London, or Montmartre in Paris. It's absolutely out of the line of travel. The conventional New Yorker would need a map to find his way about. If one wanted to slip away from the world, one could be quite lost here."

Mrs. Barrett had stopped stirring her tea and was listening with intense interest. "Quite lost?" she echoed, and did not seem conscious of speaking.

It was then that Miss Onderdonk looked directly, for the first time, at the face opposite her. Without speaking, she remained looking at it, a delicate sadness coming over her spirit like that which came to her with the reading of melancholy verse. Instead of prettiness, for which she had been prepared, this face had a great deal of beauty, but with blemishes that were like stains on a radiant texture. The long, shadowy eyes were sunken and strained; the cheeks had flattened in the center; under the pallor of the dry, drained skin, hard lumps of a malign, purplish tint gleamed angrily. The face was young, yet had the look of finality given only by age or by the long, long suffering that breeds indifference.

"You've been very ill, haven't you?" The words leaped from Miss Onderdonk without reflection. "I beg your pardon," her conservatism added.

Mrs. Barrett shook her head in denial, a nervous red spreading and fading in her face. "Tired. I'll be quite well when I rest."

"Then, my child, you ought to have in the Swedish girl. If you tire yourself here on the warm days of spring——"

Sudden light etherealized the stranger's face. "Oh, it will be like 'playing with toys!'"

"Well—eat carefully. You seem a little anæmic and ill-nourished. I've left you plenty for dinner to-night, so you won't need to market until the morning. You'll find a bottle of milk, bread and butter, a slice of cold spring lamb, and a rice pudding on which I rather pride myself."

She bent forward, and, in a gentle, guardianlike way, placed her fingers on Mrs. Barrett's arm. The effect of this upon the stranger was surprising. A hard tremor ran through her; her dark eyes grew blurred; she laid her hand on Miss Onderdonk's, at first lightly, and then with a burning appeal in it.

"You are so kind to me!" she said piercingly. Her wistful eyes, with a look of fear in them, made a rapid search of Miss Onderdonk's face; her lips parted as if a wild cry would break from them. She hesitated—withdrew her hand very slowly, and sank back in the chair, a hushed, trembling figure, hiding an inner storm.

The watcher's held-in breath came sharply. A cry, a prayer, a confession had almost been spoken by this woman and had been dragged back.

"You'll want to hear something about your neighbors." Miss Onderdonk's curiosity was prodding her, but so was the desire to say something to interest and comfort.

Mrs. Barrett raised an exhausted face. "You mean the people in the house?" An anxious frown shot down between her brows. "They don't try to know each other—do they?"

"There are some in the upper rooms that I've not even seen; they come and go all the time. You can't help meeting the permanent ones, however, and if you like 'types,' you'll enjoy them."

Miss Onderdonk poured out more tea. "There's a little dressmaker downstairs in the front—Mrs. Murray. *She's* a mixture! Spanish and Irish American. Her grammar is awful, sometimes, and yet she has a streak in her that will make her weep over a sonnet or a sunset. On this floor, the front parlor is rented to an old German who mends violins. If the cupboards and the wardrobe didn't divide him from you, you'd hear a wailing like sick animals! He's always celebrating some anniversary or other, and then he nails smilax around the frame of his door, and has some very old men come to drink coffee with him. Each plays on something, and all *beautifully!*"

"Over there"—she pointed across Mrs. Barrett's head to the big double mahogany doors—"is the back parlor of the house next door, which in its palmy days communicated with this as a double mansion. And in there"—her eyes brightening like a connoisseur's over a treasure—"divided from you by seven inches of old Domingo mahogany that's clamped by rusty bolts which have not budged for twenty years, you have a neighbor who's as interesting as many a three-volume novel! Do you read the papers?" she asked, in a sudden way, pointed with meaning.

"Yes."

"Then you've read lately about John Cross?"

"No."

"Haven't you read of the soldier, a man in the ranks, who out in the Philippines, about last November, made a wonderful record for bravery—things to take your breath away—who's refused promotion and doesn't seem even to want the usual medal? *Now* do you remember?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Barrett nodded, "I saw something about that quite recently. But surely——" and she trembled inquiringly.

"*He's* your neighbor," said Miss Onderdonk, and pointed again to the big doors, "in there."

Mrs. Barrett looked over her shoulder. "In there!" she murmured with a wondering sigh. "A house like this is

almost terrifying—each life packed into a room as if into a box, only a wall or a door between."

"I've not seen John Cross, but Mrs. Murray has. She burst in here one morning about two weeks ago with the news that the back-parlor rooms of the next house—they're made into a regulation sort of suite—were rented. A big Irishman—a servant, as it has since turned out—had arrived with a trunk filled with packing cases, and with three men to help him. A few days later a cab stopped, and a tall young man, ghastly pale and leaning on a cane, was helped in by the big Irish servant. A nurse arrived the same day. A doctor came and went. I must confess I was as curious as Mrs. Murray—and then, after a few days, we read in the paper all about the new arrival—that he was an Englishman who had served as a common soldier in the Philippines; that he had refused promotion; and had been granted a discharge because of ill health following some terrible wounds. A reporter found out who he was, and that the Irishman who is his servant now had been his comrade in the ranks for years—in fact, had come from England with him."

"But how," came faintly, "how did the reporter find out about him if he—*hid*—here?"

"Oh, trust *them*! A young newspaper man used to live upstairs. He told me that if he once got on the track of something that promised *news*, he never rested night or day till he had what he called a 'scoop' for his paper. He said that a hint could put him on the scent, and that, once started, he was like a South Sea head-hunter instead of a sane American with a pencil and notebook."

She laughed at the memory of the young reporter, and Mrs. Barrett struggled desperately to give an answering smile. But her lips, after a fluttering, settled into taciturnity. Her pale hand upon the table crumbled bread absently. She had a dull, self-communing look.

"Isn't it interesting about John Cross?" Miss Onderdonk asked.

"It doesn't seem like humdrum life," Mrs. Barrett smiled, rousing herself.

"Oh, my dear, I often think that life is exactly like a story, only we don't recognize its drama because it's around us instead of in lines of print between pasteboard covers."

Miss Onderdonk might have speculated more about the soldier-invalid beyond the mahogany doors, or she might have talked on in an effort to learn more about this stranger whom chance had sent across her path, but a clock struck somewhere, and she looked at her watch.

"Gracious!" she exclaimed; "I missed two trains deliberately. I shall probably miss a third. And——" She stopped, astounded, her eyes on a yellow-striped cat that strolled languidly across the sill of the window. "If there isn't Piff come back, although I gave him away to a friend who lives half a mile off! What in the world shall I do with you now, Piff—you miserable vagabond?"

She squatted beside the cat and shook it tenderly. Mewing plaintively, it flattened its body, glided under her hand, and, with a leap that was all grace, landed with velvet softness on Mrs. Barrett's knees.

"Be careful of him," Miss Onderdonk advised, as she drew on her gloves. "Piff's affectionate, but has a way sometimes of saying '*Piff*' suddenly, and spreading out his claws like a little rake—that's how he got his name."

Mrs. Barrett had lifted Piff to her cheek, and he was purring there melodiously. "See!" she said wistfully. "He likes me. Have you got to give him to your friend?"

"Would you like to keep him, my dear?"

"Oh, so much!"

"Why do, then. I hadn't thought of that."

"I'll be very good to him." She stroked the cat and whispered to him. The creature settled down in the niche made by her arm, and began to blink. "He likes me," she said again, the tone full of wonder and poignant content.

Miss Onderdonk took up her light

bag in one hand, and held out the other to Mrs. Barrett. This stranger had not told her a single fact about herself, and her replies to questions that involved the personal had been monosyllabic. But Miss Onderdonk liked this better than a spineless, loquacious unreserve. Besides, she saw plainly that this woman bore the marks of a deep and very recent trouble. Her natural kindness bubbled to find an outlet in some warm words, but her conservatism kept them back, as did the dulled repose that Mrs. Barrett, during the last few moments, had seemed to hook on like a mask.

"Good-by," said Miss Onderdonk.

"Good-by, and thank you for so many things."

"You won't be lonely, after your friends begin coming to see you."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Barrett in a dull way; "not then."

"Well—good-by." There seemed nothing left Miss Onderdonk but to go, until, with a twitching, as if beyond her control, Mrs. Barrett's small, burning hand held yearningly to hers. "I don't suppose I'll get to New York for a long time"—there was an excited catch in Miss Onderdonk's voice—"but when I do, may I come to see you?"

"Oh, yes; yes, do!" The hand still clung to hers. "You've been so good, so kind—" The voice trailed off to a sigh. "Good-by."

Miss Onderdonk looked back once as she went down the stairs, and saw Mrs. Barrett, the cat crushed in her arms, gazing wistfully after her.

"Somehow I feel like a brute," she thought, as she hurried down the street; "as if I'd deserted a child on a door-



"You are so kind to me!" she said piercingly.

step. *That woman's eyes—*" The picture of her own colorless, but peaceful, days shot up before her, and made her add: "Oh, what have they looked upon?"

She gazed back at the windows of her old home. "I'll surely come here the first time I'm in New York, and yet"—she nodded conclusively—"I have a feeling that I'll never see her again."

She never did.

CHAPTER II.

THE START.

After she was left alone, Mrs. Barrett remained in the doorway and gazed into the empty hall. Through the house door, half of which was standing open,

the afternoon sunlight came up the stairs in a wash of quicksilver that exposed the dust and decay. The thin, excited voices of children playing a game and, more faintly, the throb of trains and cars came from the street. Mrs. Barrett wore the look of one who walks fearfully at dead of night from one empty room to another; that blank, yet seeking look, with fright crouching just back of it. For a pause of several minutes she stood so, the cat in her arms, the solitude of the big room yawning behind her.

A descending step on the stairs above made her draw back. She closed the door and leaned against it. Some feeling attacked her, shook her convulsively, almost overpowered her. There was despair in the way she pressed her face and body to the door. She had reached the moment when nature decides that struggle must end in temporal collapse, so that readjustment for another struggle may take place.

She let Piff fall heavily, and her fingers fumbled at the lock and bolt. She went in one disconsolate wave of motion from the door to the sofa, and fell down on it, her hat crushed back from her face by the pillows, her coat dragged up about her neck. She lay like a creature that had been at the mercy of a cantankerous sea, flung up at last to get back breath or die.

And then her sorrow seized her—then it came down on her as, in the *remembering* hours of life, sorrow will. She offered no resistance to it. She cried in the deep, bitter way that only the desolate know. The tears brought part of her life with them; she went down into the pit of her pain, to the very bottom of it.

And when she had lain there a long time with sick, burning blood and aching heart, until she seemed on the very edge of death, the first step in the work of readjustment began. She cried no more; her body slowly filled with peace; her heart grew strangely still; the coil of frantic thoughts gave place to a numbness that first put up the shutters against all thought, and then, very slowly, allowed a sane and healing

philosophy to filter in. The end was reached when she struggled up and faced the room, to find the sun gone from it, and Piff sedately using his tongue as a brush upon his amber side.

Mrs. Barrett sat very still, shrunk as in defeat, her eyes half closed, and with scorched rims. She nodded sadly at Piff who, though about to polish a paw already stiffly extended, paused to gaze at her with the eye of a student.

"Well, I've done it, Piff," she said, a smile going over her tear-inflamed face; "I said I wouldn't go to pieces, and I have." She stood up and pulled the pins from her hat. "But it's over." She pressed her hands to her head, which ached violently, and continued aloud, in a dull, murmuring way:

"It had to be. I've kept it all in so long, I thought I could go through it defiantly to the end—without a tear—not one. But that woman was so sweet! It was letting her go that did it, and starting in to be alone—again. But it's over now. Piff, come here!" She caught up the cat and laid her lips upon the sleek, striped head. "You'll never see swelled nose and red eyes again, my dear. I'm going to make each day a finished mosaic not belonging to any other that ever was. No look back! No look ahead! I swore this before, Piff, and I went under. But it won't happen again, I promise you."

Animated by this resolve, she set about making herself at home. After unpacking, she bathed her face, brushed her hair, and put on a house gown of pale-blue, woolen stuff. Like the rest of her possessions this was new, and like the gray serge, it bore marks of being one of hundreds whirled off by machines to find a place in heaps in the shops that cater to appearances at a low price; but its color was becoming to her dead-white skin and pale hair, and its crude cut had followed a graceful model that showed her body to be girlishly thin and pliant. It was with a sigh, as of one in from the desert settling down upon an oasis, that she pushed one of the chairs up to the book-case and took down one volume after

another, examining them in the fondling way of the real book lover.

A quiet happiness suffused her bent face, the rapt look that tells of an escape from the actual. Here were all of Thackeray's—oh, how could Miss Onderdonk have given them up!—and Tennyson's verse—and Rossetti's—and Swinburne's—all of Dickens', too; four of Stevenson's; two of Kipling's—old favorites not seen for so long, so long! She need never be alone now—not alone in the heaviest sense; these friends, though silent, could speak to her so marvelously.

After the shades had been pulled down and the lamp lighted, she sat at the desk and wrote at the head of a sheet of paper:

MEMO—TO BUY.

A ream of paper, foolscap size. Some softer pens. Manuscript fasteners and covers. Large envelopes. Some notebooks. Mucilage. All the magazines.

A good tonic. Something for the blood. Oxide of zinc. Orange-flower water and a good cold cream.

Later: Hire a typewriter. Get flowers for the balcony.

She pinned this on the wall above the desk, set out the dinner left by Miss Onderdonk, and ate it in company with Piff, who lapped up warm milk and nibbled dicelike bits of meat with a fussy daintiness. Afterward she seated herself in the largest armchair by the yellow lamp, and read until her sight began to swoon from sleep. By ten o'clock she was in bed.

The next morning she was astonished and made happy to realize that, on this first night in her new home, she had slept without even the fragment of a dream to trouble her. She lay upon her arm, her silver-blond hair loosened, and gazed with content at the track of light upon the floor.

It was Piff who fully aroused her. He came in from the big room with a questioning mew like the chirp of a sparrow, and then sat himself down in a prim, concise way, exactly in the middle of a rug, while he stared at her out of his gold, unblinking eyes with austere

judgment that said: "Still in bed? I marvel at you. Look at *me*." She talked to him gayly while she bathed and dressed, but he paid little attention until the scent of the coffee was filling the air and breakfast seemed imminent.

Through the first part of the morning, as she moved lightly and busily about, the moments flashed by pleasantly for Mrs. Barrett. But when everything to the last detail had been done, she sat down and clasped her hands in her lap. Just above the desk there was a decorative calendar. She had torn off the leaf belonging to yesterday, and sat looking at "Saturday." This meant that she must buy food today, because on Sunday the shops would be closed. She would have to go into the streets just as other people went. Her lips tightened as she braced herself.

She put on her hat, letting the veil droop over her hair and eyes; kissed Piff on the head, and set off into the alarms of the city. At first she walked with uneasy looks to right and left. When people approached her, she involuntarily looked aside. At other times, over clear spaces, her restless eyes flashed an inquiry from door to door, from window to window, and sometimes fixed themselves with steadfast scrutiny upon any distant, loitering figure.

But she was soon impressed by the self-absorption of New Yorkers. She saw that she walked among hurrying people who were looking inward, each seeing only himself as he went on his engrossed way. The thought was like a shield between her and the world, and she breathed more peacefully. When she made her purchases she forced herself to look straight at the people who served her, for she remembered the phrase Miss Onderdonk had used in describing the reporter hunting news: "A hint could put him on the scent." She must be careful not to suggest to her neighbors anything save the usual housekeeper.

Yet when she reached the gloom of the hall of her own house again, she became aware that her body and mind

had been as taut as a fist holding to a life rope. As her arms relaxed, the several parcels she hugged sagged sideways, and would have fallen had not a shadow suddenly overwhelmed her, and a huge, hairy hand, lunging sharply over her shoulder, straightened them. She shook with terror as she looked up, her mouth opening for a shriek. A big man had followed her, and she, deep in her own reflections, had not heard him. Dumb, she stared at him.

"They're too much entirely for you, miss," he said, with a pleasant, undulating brogue, and, before she could resist, he had taken the two largest from her weak hands.

He wore an alpaca coat and white linen trousers. He had rough, red hair, rugged cheek bones and jaw, and his blue-eyed stare had the simplicity of a ruminating calf's. Had he not spoken, a glance would have told that he was of Irish peasant stock. Also, in a way all too subtle for definition, he made himself known instantly both as a soldier and a servant.

"You've too much to carry, miss"—he smiled into her widened eyes—"even without your relieving me of *my* share."

The thought that the man was drunk was routed by his clear gaze and respectful manner. "Your share?" she asked.

"I followed you in from the grocer's, miss," he smiled, "because, in your haste, you picked up my package as well as your own. It's this one," and he tore a slip off the paper. "Did you by any chance buy a strip of bacon?"

"No," she said.

"Well, I did, and there it is!" He laughed as if they were playing a game. "So now—you see?"

"Oh," she said, "I thought—"

"You thought I was a robber, no less—and 'twas no wonder, miss. I gave you a start to make you grow an inch. Now I'll help you up—"

"Please don't trouble—"

"Sure, 'tis no trouble at all. They're too much entirely for a young lady. You should have had them sent in for you." Carrying more than half, he fol-

lowed her up the wide stairway to the door at the head of it. "'Tis here?" he asked as she paused; "not far."

"Thank you. I'm sorry I made the mistake."

"'Twas nothing at all." He turned to go, his fingers flashing to his forehead in the ghost of a military salute.

He was so winning, his face and voice so human and beaming, to let him go without a word was like willfully shutting out the sun after a wet day, like refusing water when burning with thirst. Words, against her will to hold them back, struggled out very slowly and timidly: "You live in the next house—on this floor—don't you?"

"I do, miss."

"I've read—of—Mr. Cross," she said, in the same breathless yet labored way, a self within her dazed at her making this effort to know another human being.

"I'm his man."

"He's been ill."

"Ah, dear me, he's ill now, God knows!" He nodded mournfully.

"Oh, I hoped he was better."

"The whole trouble," said the man, settling himself against the banister, and speaking in a tone of the simplest candor, "was that he left the Philippines for home before he should. Just as soon as he could crawl from the hospital he was put on the transport. 'Boys,' he said to the young doctors—and, my God, but some of them that they had out there to patch up a man were the raw gossoons!—"Boys," said he, "I want to get back to the States. For God's sake," he said, "let me get back where I'll feel a good gale making for a cold rain, where there'll be white women and dark beer," says he—jesting, miss, sick as he was!

"Well, they let him go. It's my belief he faked being better than he was. His arm grew terrible troublesome on the long voyage, and by the time we came here, a few weeks ago, he was sick right through him. It's mostly a sort of malaria that's as black as poison, and there's fever with it that'd frighten you—and then when it gets high, the poor arm, that maybe he'll lose al-

together yet—though God send not—begins to act cantankerous, and will swell and ache to the very bone."

"He was wounded very badly," Mrs. Barrett said softly.

"He was so!" The servant's droll mouth crumpled into a little purse of tender emphasis. "He left a trail of blood after him in the Philippines, if ever a man did! The hip and shoulder, and one of his lungs got some bad treatment from the dirty-skinned devils, but it was the poor left arm that fared terrible altogether. They had *Mausers*, and *while they couldn't aim any more than a fish could crack a nut*, they did damage enough to him—damage enough!"

He stood up and tucked the package under his arm, preparing to go. "I wish to God he hadn't sent off the nurse!" To the inquiry that stole over her face he continued: "About a week ago he seemed getting on fine, miss, and sitting up most of the day. Then nothing would do but the nurse must go. He got tired of seeing her hanging over him, and I don't wonder. She was a good soul, but she wore specs." His voice sank to deeper confidence: "She looked like a horse, too, poor thing—being long in the teeth."

Laughter gushed from Mrs. Barrett's lips. It startled her more than it did the listener. She became suddenly serious, conscious that for the first time in years she had laughed unthinkingly and from amusement.

"He's back in bed again," the man continued; "and it's hard to manage. What with tending him, keeping house, going on errands, and Mr. Cross left alone a good deal—well, it's not right."

"You must get another nurse, of course."

"Mr. Cross says not," he sighed, "and he's a willful man when he takes a notion. But if I knew of a nice, cheerful body with rosy cheeks, that'd do no more than stay with him when I'm out, and give him a drink, and, perhaps, read him the papers—you don't know such a one, miss, I suppose?"

A thought had leaped into Mrs. Barrett's brain. It was startling, and made

her heartbeats thicken. Unwise it was, even grotesque, and yet such a dear, cajoling thought that promised her companionship, usefulness, and a distraction from herself that she could not help letting it lead her! She found herself saying surprising words: "I'm not like that. But—would I—do?"

The man gazed at her with a contemplative smile that grew more and more bright, until it danced like a blaze of sunshine in his blue eyes, and flashed from his big, smiling mouth and snowy teeth.

"You, miss? Why, if you only would, it'd be as if the high heaven itself had opened and a beautiful angel had stepped in out of the glory!"

She gave neither word nor smile to the burst of hyperbolic praise. Now that the arrangement had been concluded, a numbing apprehension stole over her, and made her long to draw into her seclusion again. Yet she could not help saying in a stumbling, helpless way: "I'll sit with Mr. Cross, when you have to go out."

"And why not come in by way of the balcony?" the man suggested glowingly. "Then—don't you see—you won't have the bother of going into the street?"

"The balcony?" she asked, puzzled.

"And didn't you know that it's the *one* balcony running right along *forninst* both houses? Why, I can come and tap at your window when I'll be needing you, as easy as turning my hand. Thank you, miss, a thousand times." He turned again to go, adding briskly: "Wouldn't it be nice, too, if I'd tap on the window every morning and find out what you'd want in for the day in the way of groceries and the like? 'Twould be the one labor for me."

"Oh, it would be nice not having to go out—*early*." She added the last word hastily.

"And your name, miss—so I'll tell Mr. Cross?"

"Mrs. Barrett."

"Mrs.—is it? Excuse me, ma'am, but you don't look it. My name's Fergus, ma'am—Fergus McManus."

The door was shut. After dropping

the packages on the table, Mrs. Barrett hurriedly opened one of the big, doorlike windows. The man was right. To the left there were two other windows exactly like hers, the one balcony running the length of all. She came back to the center of the room, and stood twisting her hands, looking about in a bewildered way, and yet in content.

She had committed herself to an acquaintance with her neighbor, but by it, since the balcony would shelter her coming and going, she was running no further risk. In fact, by following the impulse to speak, she had helped herself, for now this Fergus McManus was to become her messenger, and would shield her that much more.

Within these four walls peace lay, and safety. If she need never leave them! With drooped head she stood listening. The growl of the city penetrated even to this remote spot, but it came over the crowding houses at the back that, like ramparts, generously and securely shut her in.

CHAPTER III.

NEIGHBORS.

Fergus McManus lost no time. At about three o'clock that afternoon, Mrs. Barrett heard his tap upon her window. She opened it, a feeling of excitement and expectancy enlivening her. Fergus was a picture of weighty respect as his hand made a wavering motion toward his eyebrows.

"Good afternoon, ma'am. If it's not asking too much, could you come in now? I want to go uptown to one of the big shops to get a few more linen pillowcases. Could you come in now, ma'am?"

"Yes." She hesitated. "You told Mr. Cross, I suppose? What did he say?"

"Ah, now, does it matter what a creature says when he's full of a lot of doctor's stuff? He *took on*, but I didn't mind him. I told him that if he didn't need anything from you, you'd be no more than an *image*! Or if he

did, you'd be just some one to give him a drink while I was out. He's terrible sleepy—maybe he won't even see you. Carry in some book you like. Come now." He lowered his voice to the note of mystery: "And—*easy—easy*."

He held the curtain aside for her to enter. She did so, prepared for several sorts of rooms, but not at all for the sort that was gradually disclosed. She was met by an atmosphere that stilled her. Thick shadow and quiet poured over her. It was curious to realize that just beyond the high doors was her own room, bathed in the metallic sunlight of the sharp March day.

The other points of difference crept to her slowly as her eyes grew used to the dimness. Both the parlors of the ancient double house were absolutely alike in every point of structure and decoration; but while her place was womanish, and as charming as a small purse directed by an understanding of the beautiful could make it, this was bare, rigid, soldierly, its furnishings startlingly unexpected.

An army officer's tent in the tropics had been duplicated as well as could be within these walls, which surely, in their many and diversified experiences, had never stared down on anything more contradictory.

The bare floor, blanched by scrubbing, had strips of matting on it. John Cross' body lay upon an army cot. The screen that shaded it was formed of plaited grass flung over an ordinary clotheshorse. The curtains on the windows were of lengths of cane sewn together with some glistening fiber. The chairs and table were of ordinary oak, but on the latter there were strange bowls and platters of bark, and an Eastern water bottle of brick-colored pottery. On the mantel there was a most hideous god, daubed with bright, crude colors. On the wall above him, primitive, savage weapons were fastened against hay-colored mats. Native hats with fringed brims decorated the tops of the dividing doors. A number of unframed photographs showed American soldiers in khaki and campaign hats, all in tropical settings, so

that the prongs of the great palms and the thimble-shaped huts fitted in to complete a Philippine mirage in this wreck of an old New York home of the forties.

Fergus had the accomplishment of moving soundlessly. He helped seat Mrs. Barrett by the table, the screen dividing her from the sick man. He pointed to the water bottle, making motions of drinking. After a last peep behind the screen, he went out with a tiptoe quiet that would have meant his fortune as a sneak thief.

Mrs. Barrett did not open her book. She rested her head against the back of the chair, and her eyes traveled with interest over every detail of the place. She had the gift of imagination. As she recalled what she had read of John Cross' bravery—so reckless it had fairly called to death—and then thought of his helpless body, in this room surrounded by the things familiar to him as a soldier, a compassion that was almost sweet to the taste pulsed up from her heart. Not only was the romance in her delighted; she was glad that this bewildering opportunity permitted her to be there, of use to him.

After what seemed a very long time in that hush, broken only by a subdued hammering from the distance where one of the first skyscrapers of the neighborhood was going up, she ventured to peep around the screen. There was the blur of a sick-bed picture—the outlines of a big, prone body, a head crowned by a snowy ice cap, an arm wrapped in bandages.

As she watched him he sighed. A twist of pain went through him, and he muttered impatiently, but in the strengthless way of one dulled by a drug. She drew back. A few moments later, he muttered again and gave a plaintive groan. Mrs. Barrett's hands had grown very cold; her posture was stiff and nervous. Now that it seemed likely that he would need her services, she was attacked by a morbid shyness. She heard him turn, and he began to speak in a low, halting voice:

"What are the bugles blowing—for?"
Said Fyles—on—parade;

"To—to—turn you out, to turn you out,"
The color sergeant—said,
"What makes you look so pale, so pale?"
Said Fyles—"

He stopped abruptly. It seemed to Mrs. Barrett that he had fully awakened, and was listening intently and waiting.

"Fergus?" The word was not much louder than his previous muttering.

Mrs. Barrett tried to answer, but for the moment a feeling almost of terror had stolen her speech. Her social sense had been damaged from disuse, and the art of agreeableness came back in mental convulsions. She could think of nothing to say.

"Who's there?" the voice asked, a little more clearly, and with decided impatience.

"I am," she said brokenly.

"Oh!" It was a distinctly ungracious comment.

"Would you like a drink?" she plunged desperately.

"No, thank you." This was even sulky. "Where's Fergus?"

"He's—gone out."

"Where?"

"To buy something—yes—linen pillowcases."

She heard him turn dolefully away. "I meant to say, madam, that I'm extremely obliged to you for coming in." He yawned, and there was a piteous note in it. "Very good of you, I'm sure," he said listlessly.

He became silent. Mrs. Barrett squirmed on the edge of her chair, feeling herself a failure.

"You called Fergus," she forced herself to say at last. "Isn't— isn't there— can't I do something for you?"

"I would like a drink—please."

When she stood by his side with the glass he was still turned away.

"Here's the water," she said flatly.

He moved stiffly. "I'll have to ask you to lift my head. Hard job, if it's as heavy as it feels."

She slipped her arm under his head, and he drank as a child does, looking up inquisitively over the glass' rim. Close to him, she saw the bright, hollow eyes, the fever-crusted and blistered lips.



When she stood by his side with the glass he was still turned away.

When she had lowered his head again, he said:

"I've a handkerchief somewhere." She gave it to him. "Would you settle that ice back a little? I don't need it on the bridge of my nose." She arranged it capably, although her hand trembled.

"Thank you," he sighed. "Why aren't all nurses like you?"

As she put the glass back on the table, pleased at his praise, she heard him say: "But, do you know, I expected to see your mother?"

She returned and stood looking down at him. He blinked up at her in an amiable way. "I thought you were Mrs. Bennett—or what is it—Barrett? I suppose you're her daughter?"

"I'm Mrs. Barrett."

"Are you?" he drowsed. "You seem very young. Perhaps it's the light. Perhaps I'd find you older if it weren't so dark."

"Perhaps." She smiled, but her heartbeats were so violent that they hurt her.

He smiled back. "This has been awfully good of you!"

She moved back. "I think you ought to be quiet, now."

"Then you talk."

Nervousness went over her in a sharp qualm, bringing self-consciousness with it. "I'd rather read to you," she said, and seized a book.

He gave her a weary and pleading look. "No! Tell me some of the news of this funny old neighborhood."

She hesitated. "I only came yesterday," she said, in a little burst.

"Oh!" This was speculative. "How many of you are there?"

"I'm—alone."

"Are you?" His eyes flickered and then closed. "What do you do? You work, of course. Precious few idlers around here except myself! You teach something?"

"No." Her breath came more peacefully, and after a halt she said, with a touch of daring: "I have dreams to sell."

This had the effect of making him open his eyes and give her a look of mock wonder: "Are you a fairy? What sort of money pays for dreams? Star dust—or the pollen off a flower?"

She laughed in a fluttering, nervous way. "I'm going to write—fiction," she said jerkily. "I'll put my stories in

big envelopes, post them at the corner, and they'll reach the fiction market that way. You see, it's very practical."

"Some day you'll write a novel?"

"I mean to try," she said, a thrilling note in her subdued voice.

"Have you a pen name, or will it be signed Barrett? You observe that I don't mean it to escape me."

"Barrett," she said briefly, with an amused shrug.

"What's your first name?" he asked.

The fear that dogged her touched her like a warning finger tip, yet from his steady look she felt forced to give out this much more of herself: "Fanny's my name."

"Old-fashioned little name! You don't often hear it nowadays. It was my grandmother's." He lay quiet for some moments, his eyes closed. The drowsiness had left his face, and a look of tensi and exhaustion had replaced it. "I wish you luck!" he murmured sincerely.

As the effects of the drug disappeared entirely, it was plain to the watcher that pain distressed him. His brow would wrinkle in helpless questioning; with futile fingers he would stroke the bandaged weight upon his chest. When she closed a shutter that had blown open, sending in a flare that evidently tortured his eyes, he said "Thank you" dully. When she lifted the ice bag and, after wiping his forehead, replaced it more comfortably, he gave her one difficult, upward look of gratitude. But when, after another half hour or so, Fergus came in, he sighed contentedly and turned his face from her. Her going away was unnoticed by him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LETTER.

The back rooms had been Fanny's home for close upon a month. During this time she had changed for the better. She looked healthier. Her face was still thin, but the meagerness had left it. She was naturally very pale, but her skin had lost both the dry, drained quality and the purple spots that had

gleamed beneath it. At times her dark eyes gazed out with the steady, heavy cloud upon them, but often they were mirthful in a subdued way. She gave the impression now of a woman tasting a delayed youth, and of a defiant cheerfulness.

The pleasures of her shut-in life were clearly catalogued. The time she spent with John Cross came first in importance; talks with Fergus about war, the tropics, and a wild life generally were second; after this came her one bit of exercise—a rapid, long walk, always taken at night; lastly, there was her acquaintance with little Mrs. Murray, the dressmaker on the lower floor, who had already made one summer gown for her, and was busy with a second. She had much to be thankful for. She told herself this many times every day.

On one of those fresh, penetrating, *still* mornings that come in April she was resting in a deep chair after settling her rooms. When the click of a thimble finger was heard on the door, she ran gayly to answer it. "On time to the minute!" she cried.

Mrs. Murray, her arms infolding billows of azure crape, stepped blinking from the darkness of the hall into the light. Once she had been pretty. Now she was frail and of nunlike pallor. Her sunken, luminous black eyes had arrows of light in them. Indianlike hair came down over her veined temples in black wads as solid as satin.

She was one of the many whimsicalities of Greenwich Village. On her father's side she was Irish American, smacking of the East Side streets; on her mother's, pure Spanish. She talked English with many of the idioms and errors of a deck hand, but she was as Spanish in looks and temperament as any flower seller in Madrid. In her teens she had married a handsome, Irish sailor, who had shipped on a sugar schooner to Cuba, and been lost in the hurricane that wrecked the boat; his vivid, reckless face, shut within a locket, lay above her heart.

This was her history in little, but that, with even a small portion of good

fortune, she would have made one for herself of quite a different sort was evident after an hour with her. For she was an emotional worshiper of beauty in every form. The only outlet for her enthusiasm was her work, and she gave to the making of a gown the reverence that an artist expends on a canvas. Unless people "appealed" to her, she would not sew for them; unless she liked the materials given her, she would refuse the work, no matter how much she needed the money.

To Fanny, she stood pathetically for the *beginnings* of things—a wonderful potion left half mixed; a beautiful house with stairways or windows omitted. They had become friends. Fanny was even admitted to her most sacred confidence—a romantic attachment for big, blue-eyed Fergus.

"He's the only man I've ever give a thought to, Mrs. Barrett, since Tom 'went down to the sea in ships.' But there's somethin' sort of thrilling about that big fellow, red hair and all," she had said. "He's kind of like spicy carnations twinklin' in the sun after an April shower. Now, that *ain't* foolish, either—for some people *make* you think of gardens—and some of *tack factories!* That's *honest*."

After entering the room to-day, she stood thoughtfully removing a nest of pins from the corner of her mouth, her rapierlike glance following Fanny as she closed and locked the door.

"Why d'you keep on doing that, Mrs. Barrett?"

"What?"

"Always locking the door."

"Oh, I feel more comfortable that way," Fanny said, in a light tone of dismissal.

Mrs. Murray's big eyes had a rapacious stare. "Are you—*afraid?*" she asked, in a delighted, chilling whisper.

"Afraid?" Fanny's gaze did not waver as she tried to read her face.

"Afraid of—*something?*"

"Why, no—*no!*"

"You seem like that to me." She crept nearer mysteriously. "Mrs. Barrett, if you're keeping out of somebody's way—let me help you. My

room's right by the front door. Now, if any one comes askin' questions about you, shall I say you *are* here, or shall I say you *ain't?*"

Fanny forced a laugh and patted her shoulder. "You're romantic. I merely don't like to think that the house door is so often left open—why, any one could walk straight from the street in here! Don't you see?" She tried not to explain too earnestly. Although still watchful, she smiled into Mrs. Murray's steady, intense eyes. "I never lived in a city as big as this before. It frightens me a little."

"That's it," said Mrs. Murray fondly, but with the patronizing inflection of the born New Yorker. "Though you don't look it, you're just a *hayseed*—that's all!"

The fitting progressed. She spun Fanny under her fingers as if she had been a toy.

"I returned Mrs. Davidson's dress!" she announced superciliously, after a few moments. "I never was meant to fit stiff, gray, glazy alpaca on a woman *who's had nine children*. 'Here,' I says to her, 'get some one who ain't got *artistic ideals* to make it. A gray alpaca basque *with seams*, and a skirt lined with *buckram* ain't within hollerin' distance of my standard!' I says."

"Wasn't she furious?" Fanny asked, amused.

"No, she just give me a tired look. 'You got wheels!' she says." Mrs. Murray sighed and shook her head. "That's it, Mrs. Barrett! Any one who holds to their *ideals* is called *nutty* by the *common herd*."

They sewed together afterward. By promising to help her, Fanny always managed to keep Mrs. Murray as long as possible. The companionship made a soothing break in her long solitude—they two stitching contentedly, the pretty room peaceful, Piff dozing, the kettle for tea singing on the stove behind the curtain.

"You've not said one word about Fergus to-day!" Fanny exclaimed, after a pause.

Mrs. Murray looked up. Her black eyes grew quickly misty, but her fierce

spirit blazed through them. "That's all over," she snapped.

"Quarreled—eh? About what?"

"We quarreled about Mr. John Cross!" said Mrs. Murray bitterly. "It come about like this: Yesterday Fergus was in to see me. He talked of his old home near Killarney, and how often he felt homesick for it. And so, as innocent as a lamb, I says, 'I guess Mr. Cross often wishes *he* could get a smell of *England*, and often wishes he was back in the army there.'

"He turned on me, Mrs. Barrett, as sharp as a meat ax! '*The army!*' he yells; '*what army?*'"

"Why, the *English* army," says I. 'The papers the other days spoke of it.'

"Damn the papers!" he says. 'Why can't they shut up about what don't concern them?'

"Well, then," says I, 'why don't Mr. Cross say *why* he left *England* and not keep people guessin' about him and you?'

"Up steps Mr. Fergus and picks up his cap. 'I might have known!' he says, *just like that*—not another word!

"I jumped up and stood like Fedora, my arms acrost the door, keepin' him from goin' out. 'Known *what?*' I demands.

"He gave me a look like I was a worm, Mrs. Barrett. 'That you're just like all women, from Eve down—a lump of sizzling, white-hot *curiosity!*' Then he glared at me. 'Inquisitive women like you,' says he, 'ought to get a spanking every morning with a hair-brush—with the *bristly side!*' says he; 'twould do you a world of good!'"

She paused here eloquently. "After that I flung open the door, and pointed out just like this," and she extended a stiff index finger, "'Go,' I says; 'you're no gentleman!'"

As she was speaking the last dramatically scornful words, a skein of smoke floated past the window. They plainly heard the sound made by lips puffing on a pipe.

"Fergus! Will you see him?" Fanny asked, excited.

Mrs. Murray arose with terrible dignity. "I'll come back this afternoon,

Mrs. Barrett, and I'll be glad then to enjoy a cup of tea with you in a *refined* manner—but *women beaters* ain't in my class!" She marched out as if suddenly sewed into lengths of the buckram she despised.

Fanny put her head out of the window and saw Fergus only a few feet away. She beckoned to him, and he stepped in, cap in hand.

"Good morning," she said blithely. "How's Mr. Cross to-day?"

He made a pitiful grimace as a mother does over a rebellious child. "Ah, very willful to-day, God bless him! Restless, ma'am—and asking for you *continual*."

"I'd have gone in earlier, but Mrs. Murray was giving me a fitting." She put her hands on her hips, a long, laughing look following. "Fergus, how nice if you and she should fall terribly in love and get married!"

Her words surprised him so that he straightened as if at the command: "Attention!" His mouth remained open. "Me, to marry?" he said, aghast.

"Why not?" she challenged.

"Why, Mrs. Barrett, there isn't a woman living that could get me."

"Oh, don't talk as if you were a *prize package*, Fergus!"

"I'm not, ma'am—I'm not." He became quickly drenched with humility. "I should have married when I was young and manageable. I'm spoiled for it now. Besides"—he shook his head solemnly, his face radiant with affection—"I'm booked—*for life*—in the service of Mr. Cross."

"Oh, that's it?" Funny murmured, with wonder and respect.

"You can't serve two masters, Mrs. Barrett, and be a hap'orth of good to either of them. I've got the habit now of just being hand and foot to Mr. Cross. I'm fit for nothing else; and I *want* nothing else. Ah, but he's been a wonder to me!"—in a long whisper of tenderness—"and we've been through hell together! It'd never seem natural for us to part now, after the long, long climb up. And so," he continued, a twinkle coming back to his doglike eyes, "that's why I've *never* said a word of

love to any female person since I came to America long ago——"

"Oh, in that case——" she shrugged conclusively.

"That I haven't," he went on emphatically, "told them to *beware* of me! On my word, Mrs. Barrett, the way I describe myself, in between every word of love I utter, would make any *roo* you ever heard of look like a day-old kitten! The description would make you *sick*, ma'am. It's enough for a woman to run a mile from me!"

"Do they run, Fergus?" Fanny asked, laughing.

"Well, 'tisn't for *me* to say it, ma'am," he admitted, with a solemn sigh, "but they *don't*."

"All want to reform you?"

"That's it!" he nodded. "Women—God bless them!—are oddities. They like to take holt of a holy terror of a man and polish him and scour him as they would a kitchen boiler!"

He had stepped over the window sill and was laughing back at her. But as a furious blow, like the command of a gavel, struck the door leading to the hall, he stood still. The sound had an astonishing effect upon Fanny. She rocked forward weakly, her palms upon the table. Her face became gray-white. The knock shook the door again, and her name was yelled in a hoarse, imperative voice:

"Barrett! Barrett!"

Fergus stepped back into the room. Fanny was murkily aware that he was looking at her in alarm. His words came to her as if from a drab thickness.

"What's wrong, Mrs. Barrett? Sure, it must be the postman—that's all."

Self-defense prodded at her. She tried to stand erect, tried to smile at him. "Oh, how nervous I am—how foolish to let oneself——" The words dwindled on her dry lips as she took a few steps. Her fingers went feebly to her face, and she found it wet and cold. "Will you see—who it is, Fergus, please? Will you please—*see*?"

Fergus strode like an avenger to the door and unlocked it defiantly. As he did so he gave one look back and saw

that Mrs. Barrett's eyes were like black circles in her white face. They flared *beyond* him. He opened the door.

"Barrett?" came querulously from the shadow.

"Yes, it's Barrett," he cried angrily. "You made ructions enough to break down the house. Did you think you were at a deaf-and-dumb asylum?"

A heavily burdened postman stepped in. At sight of him, Fanny's blood slowly warmed, her heart settled into calmer beats. Though her hidden hand still had to clutch the table, strength came back to her.

"Have you a registered letter?" she asked faintly.

"Yes, ma'am." He extracted a large letter from a number. It had a red card and a white slip strapped to it, and he handed her a stubby pencil. "*You're* Mrs. Barrett?"

"Yes."

"You sign there—and *there*."

Fanny withdrew to the table, bent over the card so that it was hidden, and used the pencil in a clumsy fashion, writing backward with big strokes.

When the postman had left, Fergus waited halfway down the room, thinking she might have something else to say to him. But she had forgotten him. As he hurried out by the window, he saw her face—still ghastly, but with an eerie radiance transforming it—bending over the letter.

The writing was a woman's. There was no beginning to it, no signature:

Notice the postmark and then tear up the envelope. As soon as you read this, tear it up, too. We are still here. I don't dare hurry him before the time we arranged to leave. He has noticed how nervous I've become. I keep thinking of you all the time. I'm so afraid. Oh, be very careful. I don't dare make any very clear statements in this. They must wait till we can talk. I must not even mention the possible date of my visit to you, but a reasonable time after you receive this letter, allowing for a delay here of a few weeks, I'll get to you. Here is some money. This is safer than a money order. Keep up your spirits. Don't write again. God bless you!

On the back of the envelope a name was scrawled that stood for "Brown." Within it, there were ten American

bank notes of twenty dollars each. The postmark was "Venice."

CHAPTER V.

DRIFTING WRECKS.

Fergus went along the balcony and entered the adjoining room so quietly that only the inflections of light and shadow made by his careful lifting of the curtain told of it. He could see his master's head plunged down in his arms, his big body stretched out, and swathed, soldierlike, in the thin blanket. Fergus' face grew radiant. Mr. Cross had dropped off. Ah, that was splendid, splendid altogether!

He slipped off his boots and put on a pair of felt slippers that were ready to his hand. Without removing his cap, he sat at the table and took up a stocking with a darned egg in the toe. His big fingers, glistening with reddish-white hairs and strong enough to strangle a wolf, handled the needle with almost a woman's effectualness. Without warning, a huge kick displaced the orderly blanket.

John tilted his head back to look at him. "What time is it?"

"Going on to one, sir."

"Oh, dear!" This was said as a tired child would say it, and he fell back impatiently. "Oh, Lord!"

He was not the very sick man that Mrs. Barrett had first seen. The ambitions of the convalescent were goading him. He was partially dressed. A currant-colored, Canton-silk dressing gown covered his pongee pajamas. His arm was only lightly bandaged. The subdued, yet clear, light showed him to be a big, bony, gray-eyed man. His pale-brown hair, cut very close, crinkled in the narrow, stubborn waves that one sees on the marble heads of the Athenian deities.

There were other points of resemblance to these physically splendid ideals—the wide sweep of the jaw line; the delicate, enduring carving of brow and nose; the perfect shape of the long head, small for the body, and set in a dominant way on a long, muscular

throat. Long ago, in his school days in England, his resemblance to a bronze Mercury decorating the gymnasium, together with his triumph as a runner and vaulter, had earned him the nickname of "Wings." This classical suggestion endured, though now the rippling hair showed sparkles of gray, though the lines of hard living, and the clay-white left by fever, were on the face.

If he were not well past forty years, then he was a younger man who had been tossed, and burned, and pounded in the pestle of experience until all but the sediment of youth had gone out of him. And yet, that there endured in him a fantastic humor was shown by his mouth, twisted to keep back laughter, as he listened to Fergus, who had begun to sing a negro song softly, with a little more brogue than usual.

"Can I tempt you with a bit of broth, sir?" Fergus asked, stopping before him.

"No." This was said indifferently.

"Is there anything you *would* like, sir?"

"I'd like Mrs. Barrett!" This was said with resentful conciseness.

"Well, until she comes—"

There was a sound from the balcony.

"Is *that* Mrs. Barrett?" John demanded, turning and blinking, "or is it only her confounded yellow cat?"

Before he had finished speaking, Fanny's low-pitched voice, with its tonic quality, came to him: "Ready for me?"

She dipped under the twinkling window curtains, and, smiling at Fergus, who was retreating to his own room with his workbasket, she crossed to the bed. "How do you do?" she nodded.

John glowered at her, but with a happy underlight in his face. "I've been fighting a frenzy to jump out of the window and run amuck like a Malay."

"As bad as that?"

He pressed her hand before releasing it. "Why didn't you come sooner?"

"Are you sure I'm not coming too much? Think of your doctor that I've eluded by the window so far. Suppose he should ever see me," she smiled, "and

shut me out altogether? *Then*—what would you do?"

"Break his head," he said calmly.

She laughed and eyed him with an open fondness. "You nice man! Maybe it won't be long before you *can* break heads."

He turned upon his good arm and gazed at her in the deepest contentment. Fanny sat down by the bed and took up "Vanity Fair." "You have it ready. Good!"

"Put it away," he said.

"Put what away?"

"That book." He took it from her hand. "I mean to talk of *you*, to-day." He saw her eyes narrow suddenly in a look of distaste. The melancholy that he had often noticed passed over her face like the shadow from a flitting cloud. She sat chilled and thoughtful. "I am *tiresome*. Think of something else."

"Let's go on with 'Vanity Fair,' " he said shortly, handing her the worn volume. "You were up to old Pitt Crawley's proposal. Is the light quite right for you?"

She flung the book on the bed. "I don't like your tone. I shan't read a word. I see you have something you must say. Say it."

John lay for a while looking past her, thinking. The grave look deepened the ravages made by his long illness. He was so big—so weak! Made for strength and purpose—he lay there so helpless! Fanny felt her heart pulled toward him by a very tender yearning. The adoring look that a mother drapes about a child taking its first steps, deepened in her dreaming eyes.

"Go back to the first day I saw you," John said reflectively; "when being alive was merely a grinding pang between opiates. For nearly a month since, every day, you've been here beside me—an angel! Why, in that time a dozen battles could be fought. And yet, at the end of it, are we friends? Not in the real sense. You're still Mrs. Barrett, a very charming, reticent young lady who lives alone, next door. I'm John Cross, a sick soldier. There you are!" he shrugged. "I've had hopes

that we'd grow to be real pals. But *you* don't feel that way about *me*. That's all."

"But we *are* friends, now!" she said wistfully.

"No, sweet and jolly as you've been, you've held me off in tongs. I've felt them give a tighter pinch whenever I tried to get a bit nearer to you." He moved to the extreme edge of the pillow and continued, with a subdued vehemence that magnetized her: "Have you ever thought of the wonder and charm of an old house like this? It's a sort of Sargasso Sea. We're two of the wrecks that have drifted into it. A whim brought me here; a chance brought you. Well, we two happened to knock against each other, and found comfort in being close to each other. It was as a wreck—of a sort—that I spoke as I did to you just now—a *woman so silent, so alone!*"

Again the fear inspired by Miss O'nderdonk's words: "A hint could put him on the scent," prodded Fanny. Had she been suspiciously reticent? Too markedly alone? John's words brought her back.

"You see," he said, with a boyish smile, "I happened to like you tremendously at once! I'd give a lot to have you like me the same way." A light bitterness quivered over his face. "I don't speak like this easily. Usually I'm as silent, as difficult as you. People would tell you I'm a sour, secret man. But from the very first there was something about you that seemed to pull me up out of a pit. The secret of attraction is hard to make out. All this may be flat boredom to you."

"Oh, no—no, no," Fanny held out her hand, and he gathered it warmly into his big clasp. A wild, choking note crept into her voice. "It's curious what you said about the Sargasso Sea, where all wrecks drift. We've seemed something like that to me. This old house has reminded me of a bit of sheltered beach—and you and I are two pieces of driftwood, tossed up after storms at sea, to rest upon it, side by side." He had a sense of dark and painful things behind her gaze. A hard shiver went

over her, and twitched her fingers. Her voice was very faint. "Maybe we can—while we're here—help each other?"

"Let's try!" he said.

She did not speak again until he had allowed her to draw her hand from his hold. Then quick, defiant comedy flashed at him from eyes weightily demure. "You want to find out things about me. My age—first?"

"On the contrary, I'm wholly civilized, and the enemy of many standard superstitions. That time makes us all old equally, I deny. Besides, I don't like associating a woman with arithmetic in any form."

"That's all very well for the woman who looks younger than she is. In my own defense, I'll tell you that I'm just twenty-seven. You thought me older?"

He studied her. "No, not older—for the most striking thing about you is your air of youth. But sometimes you seem a too-mature, careworn child. It all depends upon—the *something*," he said gropingly, and smiled at her in a gentle, vague way. "It's awfully queer—as mysterious as the little red mouse that Goethe saw peeping from the girl's lips. A shadow comes and goes upon you. Something sad, and wise, and patient is seen behind your eyes—"

"It's a touch of blight," Fanny said in a calm, convinced tone.

"No," he winced, "it's not *that*—"

"Blight," she nodded; "that's what it is."



"You wouldn't play me such a trick as that when you've almost given me the plot for a story?"

He looked at her with a melting kindness. "Why, Fanny, you are like a little white flower."

He had not spoken her name thinking. That it was unplanned made a pain that was sweet throb deeply in her. In his thoughts she was "Fanny." The gladness kept troubling her as she answered: "A flower after hard winds and wild rains—perhaps. Now what else would you like to know?"

He hesitated. "I've noticed you don't wear a wedding ring. Are you a widow?"

She looked down at her bare hand. "My husband is dead. His memory is horrible. I sold the ring years ago when I was hungry."

"You don't mean that—literally?" he asked, with a look of trouble.

"Hunger, and thirst, and I knew each other well at intervals." A contemptuous laugh twisted her mouth sideways, and she shrugged. "Life has used me so—so—cruelly—in so many ways—it's become *funny*."

John looked away from her. The merriment—that was not merriment—in her young face, hurt him. "I'll only ask you one more thing—and this is *so* important. How long are you going to stay here?"

"That depends."

"May I ask on what?"

"On the tides." Her eyes dwelt upon his face with a deep, sweet gaze. "They creep up—they creep back. Who can tell what they'll do—what they'll leave or draw back into the vast seas?"

"Don't worry me! You want to stay?" he pleaded.

"Oh, you may be sure," she said, in a subdued, yet fierce, way, "that I'll stay as long as I can!"

"That's good." He sank back, happy. "I like this way of living, just because it's not steamheated, fireproofed, conventional. I mean to keep on here until I buy a ranch in Arizona and settle there."

He saw her gaze stray about the room, come back to his helpless arm, and linger on his face with the compassion that, even when awakened momentarily in a stranger for another stranger, has its roots in human love.

"You've not been very communicative, my friend! You've never said a word to me of your glorious record in the Philippines."

"Oh, don't let's talk of *that*!" he cried petulantly; "I was afraid you might. It's grown a bore. Here's the absolute truth—I did no more than scores of others, as the army reports would show. This is not modesty. It's the truth. I happened, by some fluke, to get the newspapers telescoped on me, possibly because I'm an Englishman—"

"And," she said, holding up her finger, "because it got about that you refused a commission in our army.

Wasn't that contemptuous? Since you fought for the United States as a soldier, why don't you accept the honor it offers, and become a captain?"

He rolled his head reflectively, his look impatient. "My dear Fanny—if you'll let me call you so—this only proves how twisted things get by rumor. I was only offered a captaincy in the quartermaster's or commissary department of the regular army. That was all I *could* be offered—not in the fighting force—not in the cavalry, artillery, or infantry. Military rank *with* commercial work attached to it, would not, under any circumstances, appeal to me—the garb of a captain behind the counter of a grocer—"

"Of course not," she cried warmly.

"I could have been a captain of volunteers—" He stopped sharply. "Why shouldn't I be *perfectly* honest with you? *I don't want—anything.*"

"That's very odd. But you must have some reason. You speak as if you have."

"A very deep one," came vehemently from lips that were almost closed; "the deepest possible!"

Questions fought at her tongue's end. She knew that she was full sister to Eve, to Bluebeard's wife, to Mrs. Murray—the eternal woman fumbling at the key that locked another's secret—yet she spoke: "If I met you in Iceland wrapped in a polar-bear rug," she ventured, "I'd say you were *just one thing*, and that you could not possibly be anything else!"

"And what would I suggest, even in that hirsute bath robe?" John asked, grinning.

"An English officer." She spoke slowly, with daring, and watched him keenly.

He made round, childish eyes. "Do I really look like that—like the heavy, military chaps in the clubs on Piccadilly and St. James Street?"

"That's London. I've never been out of America. But I know Kipling, and when I was very young I used to adore John Strange Winter. I've built up in my imagination a perfect English

guardsman." She studied his face. "He looks exactly like you."

He did not reply directly. "The mind of a woman!" he murmured; "it's very interesting!"

There were steps in the hall, and Fergus came into the room. "I believe it's the doctor, sir."

Fanny sprang up, but John lunged for her hand, and lifted it to his lips. He kept it long there, although she resisted.

"You've been so bully!" he said with sincere gratitude. "And now we are pals."

She left him, her face happy. He raised himself on his elbow and smiled dreamily after her until the curtain fell.

CHAPTER VI.

IN VENICE.

During these days, incidents whose undercurrents circled around the life of Fanny were taking place in Venice. In the old palazzo that they had hired by the month—a dream-haunted place of yellowed marble and dim frescoes—Mr. and Mrs. Esray Heath had said good night to the ten people who had been guests at one of their dinners, which had the reputation of being both splendid and grotesque.

Two detached young men—Simon Burgess, an American newspaper correspondent, and Wallace Craig, a Scotch novelist—had been of the party. While their gondola stole across the reaches of starry water, and they smoked Esray Heath's excellent cigars, they discussed him, his wife, and their guests.

"I think this was the queerest dinner yet," said Craig. He was an anæmic youth with loose, sneering lips, good manners, bad morals, and a reputation for saying and writing pert and clever things. "The dropping rose leaves didn't go at all with the introduction of the jester and the minstrels in doublet and hose—one medieval, the other early Roman. But such distinctions do not trouble the fatty deposit under the skull of Esray Heath. I wonder his wife didn't keep him from making such a hodgepodge."

"Perhaps she tried—I'm quite sure he's obstinate sometimes. All stupid people are."

"Is it true that a high-priced rose extract was really sprinkled on the real flowers?"

"It certainly smelled overpoweringly rosyish."

"Well, we were a queer dozen—the old, half-deaf marchesa, who, for a dinner with such vintage wines, would dine with Old Nick; his *Disgrace*, the Duke of Tadminton; even our two selves, asked in the hope that we may assist the Esray Heaths in their climb up the ladder which really leads to so little for all the trouble. I shan't go again. Just what is their status in America? They'll be perfectly ripping as copy."

"Their place," said Burgess, "is outside the doors of fashion, knocking, constantly knocking, impervious to snubs. 'Let us in!' they say; 'we have millions and millions, and we want to please you. It is true that we are so new we *creek*—but, then, we are so rich we *chink*—and we *do* want to please you. Try us and you'll get your money's worth.' Would you like to hear a bit of their early history?"

"Would it interest me?"

"You want good, literary grist for American types. You can use it in that way; but remember, it's otherwise confidential."

"I'm safe. You know that."

Burgess drew his knees almost up to his chin, his collar lifted to his ears against the increasing chill.

"My memories of Heath and his wife," he began, "go back fifteen years, before they were married. I saw them first when I went to be the assistant editor on *The Daily Star* in Locust City, Nebraska. I got to know them by sight and hearsay. I was a drudge and made few acquaintances; they didn't happen to be among them. In those days," Burgess drawled with a side twist of the mouth, "our host's name was neither Esray nor Heath."

"The bounder has even an alias!" Craig commented.

"Not exactly. He's merely a made-over in every sense. His father kept a

sort of small department store, a place whose range of offerings went from dried apples to stove polish. The name over the shop was Ezra Heit. The old man was of Prussian and New England stock—a good sort, frightfully ambitious for his only son—Ezra. Ezra never soiled his hands selling candles or slicing ham, but during his vacations from college I've seen him sitting on a pickle barrel, manicuring his nails, while he watched his father do both."

"My God!" said Craig. "And to-night he was able to tell of buying a race horse for ten thousand pounds!"

"As well as I remember, Ezra was thinking of being either a lawyer or a doctor. Within limits, he was counted shrewd and very brisk mentally. But he was *heavy*. I've heard him described as 'wet sawdust.' Even when he talked of what he understood, he bored. He had no resiliency. He has none now. Well, immediately after leaving college, he married, and a year or so after that his father died. It was not long before the most astounding news struck Locust City like a shell. Lands that old Heit had bought on speculation in Virginia had developed tin, or oil, or zinc—something filthy that means money—and overnight Ezra found himself a very rich man. One million seemed fairly to breed another, until he became what he is to-day—not one of the spectacular millionaires, yet of sufficient importance to have a place near the bottom of the gold-edged list of the 'multis.'"

"Who was his wife?" Craig asked. "His money hasn't made her happy. What's the trouble there?"

"Stark boredom—an abysmal weariness of the game," said Burgess conclusively.

"How old is she?"

"About thirty-eight—about four years older than her husband. The modern riddle that hammers the sky—*why do some women marry some men?*—generally has a most prosaic answer. It's so in this case," he continued in the tender tone of one who loves his subject. "She was the daughter of a Locust City doctor, one of the sort who makes his own pills and carries them

with him in the back pockets of a frock coat. She was a good many cuts above the Ezra Heit of those days. Her name was Claudia Lawson—you've heard him call her 'Clo.'

"She had a sister—oh, fully ten or a dozen years younger than herself—an *astonishingly* pretty girl! When I saw this sister first she was a graceful, charming child with a joyous air, eyes like big, dark flowers in a milk-white little face, and silver-gold hair lying heavily all around her brow and ears. Her name was Fanny or Annie—no, it was Fanny.

"Well, the elder sister was quite the most talked-of young woman in Locust City. She had a glorious, dramatic soprano voice, sang in church and at concerts, and when she was twenty or so, her father sent her to Paris, where she studied for years. Her goal was nothing less than grand opera. The people of Locust City expected big things of Claudia Lawson, and my paper published foreign letters from her. Quite suddenly she came home. Her voice was utterly gone—diphtheria had done for it.

"She continued, however, to be the most conspicuous of the society girls in Locust City—having been to Europe and learned how to speak French—and Ezra Heit, when making his plans to settle in New York—this was before he developed the oil, or zinc, or whatever it was—was very glad to get her to marry him. As her father had in the meantime died, leaving nothing but debts, and her voice was gone, there is no doubt but that she took Ezra just as board and lodging for herself and her sister. *That's* the explanation of the marriage." He shrugged.

"The sister was about sixteen at this time," he droned on. "She had a precocious, but decided, talent for story writing. Our paper published some of her stuff. Considering that it came from a kid like that, it was surprising—imagination in it—a good, gripping style. Some of the Eastern magazines published a few short stories. She was very promising, in fact. Besides this, she was so pretty that there was

scarcely a boy or man in the town who didn't make her his standard of beauty. I met her once at a church party and dreamed of her that night. A newspaper cut was nailed above my desk, sharing honors with an old photograph of Adelaide Neilson—whom, by the way, she resembled very strongly. Just about this time she began making history for herself—or, rather, allowed another to make it for her."

Burgess' tone took on a dramatic meaning. "Locust City was pretty close to the Pecultico gold mines, which were having a big boom. A good many strangers passed through Locust City; a few stayed. Among the latter was a man named Steven King." He leaned forward, and his look was inward, though his narrowed eyes peered ahead like an artist's studying a picture. "Lord, what a fascinating study life is! Think of my remembering, to-night, every detail concerning Steven King! I don't believe I saw the man more than a dozen times, but had he wished, he could have fastened me to him as a friend, for life.

"He was a graceful, long-limbed fellow of about twenty-eight or so, with thick, soft hair as black as coal, brushed back straight as Frenchmen wear theirs; eyes of a melting dark blue, with a lazy smile deep down in them—the sort of eyes that pull the heart out of a woman—a laugh and a smile to warm you through and through; a voice that was everything a man's voice should be, and one of the most persuasive I've ever heard; a devil-may-care lightness to him; a gay, sharp wit; a schoolboy's sense of the ridiculous; a simplicity and friendliness that made children adore him; a touch of helplessness and pathos that made old ladies want to adopt him. That was Steven King!"

"Whew!" said Craig. "That sort of perfection is never quite normal. Usually the devil has a hand in it."

"Now you're talking!" said Burgess. "When you were out of reach of his diabolical charm, you were aware of a distinct distrust. As you say, it sprang from the man's sheer attractiveness,

which was so bewildering it troubled. No one so handsome, so clever, so winning, so exquisite a gentleman as Steven King appeared to be, should have been as he was, a loose end, a reckless soldier of fortune, with family and history both vague—unless there was something wrong somewhere."

He raised a minatory finger and continued: "There *was* something wrong. The fellow proved to be as tainted morally as a mildewing cheese. Although he came of educated, blameless people, he had been expelled from two colleges, and had spent his early twenties in a reformatory. He was congenitally deformed, a criminal by taste, a born 'crook.' These things about him came out by degrees, but not until about two years or so *after* he had bolted from Locust City. I've spoken of him in connection with the Heaths, because he didn't bolt alone—he took Fanny Lawson, the idol of her sister's heart, the beauty of the city, with him."

"I knew he would," said Craig, with much satisfaction. "My novelist's nose scented that eternal sacrifice of the woman. What became of her?"

Burgess shook his head vaguely. "After the news of their fortune, the Heaths, as soon as it could be arranged, left the town. They vanished from my horizon altogether. I think it was fully six or seven years afterward, when I was in South America, that I happened to pick up an old New York newspaper in a Valparaiso café. There, told in a few paragraphs, I read that a man who had been known by various names—Mordaunt, and Varick, and Steven King—was wanted for counterfeiting on a large scale, that he had eluded arrest by hiding as a worker in a coal mine in Colorado. This last was learned when, after a fire-damp explosion and entombment, his was one of the bodies brought out. And then I read about his wife," said Burgess, and stopped.

"So he married her? I hadn't anticipated that."

"Yes. He married her." His face had grown serious and pitiful. "I—won't tell you that part, Craig."

"What?" Craig flung away his cigar and shook Burgess' knee. "You wouldn't play me such a trick as that when you've almost given me the plot for a story?"

"You'll have to 'finish to taste.' I'll tell you this much, however: The girl stuck to the man, and found to her cost what being married to a thief meant. She came to grief—bitter grief. Make what you like of it! But it's her fate, Craig, that has crossed and criss-crossed Mrs. Heath's face. That's the secret that's wearing her out."

"Won't you give me a hint of the fate?" Craig demanded. "If not, why not?"

"It's just occurred to me that to say anything further about her would be unkind. It's quite possible you might meet her some time—if—"

"Are you going to stop, *again*?"

"If she's alive."

"Has Mrs. Heath never spoken of her?"

"She wouldn't." Burgess set his lips grimly. "I can quite understand that she wouldn't."

The gondola stopped at Craig's door. "Well, you've played me a nasty trick, but as it's the result of a chivalrous afterthought that does you credit, come in for a whisky and soda if you like."

Burgess refused, saying he had work that would keep him busy until morning. They said good night. The gondola slipped on with a lapping sound. Burgess sprawled in comfort, smoking his cigar to the end. He was thinking of the newspaper cut of Fanny Lawson's face that long ago had looked down from the wall above his office desk.

"If she's dead, it's just as well," he thought. "Poor little thing, how could she want to live, after that? Poor little thing!"

Claudia Heath was in her private sitting room waiting for her husband. She had slipped, exhausted, into an armchair, and had stuck out her feet for her kneeling maid to replace her slippers with a pair of mules. She was a tall woman, of reedlike thinness. Her

jaw line suggested a curving blade, and stood out over her long, twisting throat. She had burning eyes, with the look in them of a soul ill at ease. Her face was etched with fine, down-dragging lines. It was a barren face; no future in it. She could be a sufficiently interested listener, clever when she roused herself, and yet one felt that she had no concern in it at all.

Her eyes, with their unexpected, but consuming, expression, were made up with bluish cosmetic; her face was whitened and rouged, her mouth made too crimson; her orange-red hair was palpably artificial in color, quantity, and structure; and yet one felt that she had no mind for what impression she made. She wore exquisite clothes, as if she had flung them on her thin body without interest, and trailed them in scorn. Sadder than sharp pain was her appalling indifference.

Esray Heath came in, and the maid went out. As he closed the door and crossed the big palace room, his wife was conscious of a sharp clarifying of her vision. It was a moment that comes at some time to almost every one, when a familiar creature, blurred by custom, will stand out clearly, distinct from previous acquaintance. Her eyes grew amused. She seemed a critical stranger looking at her husband for the first time.

He was fat—not paunchy, or misshapen by flesh in any one spot—of a settled, uniform fatness that cushioned his arms in a way to push them out from his body so that it was difficult for him to cross or fold them. His flesh had the density of soap; his black eyes, through strong glasses, often flamed up unnaturally large; but seen over the lenses they were small, sly, and restless. He had big dimples in cheeks and chin, even in his hands. His large, concavely curved nose diminished into a sensitive tip that trembled when he was interested. He had scant hair, parted in the center to make two sparse, upcurling ridges on each side, and it was whitish-blond, as were his lashes. His good points were a smile that could be pleasant, a voice that could be agree-

able, and—at astonishing variance with his heavy body—a light and graceful carriage.

"Why, he is a soft, white pig!" was his wife's thought. It ambled through her brain with the peace of a perfect truth. She watched him light a cigar. "In an earlier incarnation, he, perhaps, was a fat, pinky-white, curly-tailed pig. It's really quite amazingly funny."

"Well, it went off very well, don't you think?" he asked, propping his plump arm with difficulty on the mantel. "Even Tadminton looked impressed when he heard I'd bought Lady Bess." He chuckled. "He didn't dream that I was bidding through the Tomlinson stables. That was a sell. *Clever!*"

His wife sat with her cheek on one hand, the other swinging one of the long gloves she had pulled off, her eyes empty.

"I guess I did them pretty well, Clo, huh? They can't complain of me, as I heard the marchesa say last week of the Brinsley-Jones: 'Nothing worth putting one's tongue to but the *hors d'œuvres* and the green chartreuse.'"

She hid a yawn with a thin, ugly hand that was fiery with big jewels. "The dinner was a huge success—but it's over. Now let us talk of something that has to be decided upon. I waited up to see you for that." She looked quietly at him with an arresting expression.

"Oh, *you* don't care about this sort of thing. You never do," he snapped out.

"But I don't let it be known. Give me that credit. I exerted myself horribly to-night. I did all—all your chores—"

"I wish you'd drop those vulgar, rustic Americanisms!" he said, giving her an ugly glance.

"Burgess will do all he can for you in his papers. Craig has promised to get us Lord and Lady Edgerley. The evening, Esray, was thoroughly artificial, and, from my standpoint, vulgar—but it was useful to you—and it's over. Do we sail on the twenty-ninth?" she asked distinctly.

"How can we? You do rush things

when you *really* care. The very earliest would be the boat after that."

"Very well." Her smooth, indifferent voice after his was like the chord of a cello after the gusts of a penny trumpet. "You see I'm quite amiable? I'll wait another week. But it is definite that we sail *then* from Naples."

"I suppose so," he muttered angrily.

She rose with a willowy lightness. "Good night, Esray."

He had put his hands in his pockets and was smoking in a fierce way, fairly sucking the cigar. "Look here," he said, as with bent head she walked slowly to a door opposite him. "The only thing you care a pin about is getting to America. I know why." She waited without reply. "*It's your sister.* She's the whole trouble! When you're on the same side of the world with her, you come out of your trance." He glared at her.

"Well?"

"Well? Isn't it true?"

"So true, I'm wondering why you go to the trouble of saying it again. This happens every few months."

"Well, this time," he said, in a mincing, exasperated tone, "I've a few important things to add to it. Listen here." He sank his voice and protruded his head. "I don't intend to be bothered with the idea of your precious sister any longer. I don't intend that a convicted thief shall stand in my way any more! Is that clear? *I want her wiped out.* I'm sick of the thought of her. I'm sick of seeing you like a death's-head thinking about her. You're going to think of *me*, take an interest in what concerns *me*—or we quit!"

She came back rapidly, her face revived. "You mean a divorce?"

"Just that."

"You've come to it at last! But why do you threaten me, Esray? Isn't it what I've wanted for years?"

His small eyes twinkled at her with sneering knowledge. "You want it, provided a heap of my money goes with it."

"Of course, I want money."

"My money. You're not above taking it?"



He was going down for the second time when John plunged in again, reached him, and managed to bring him to the shore.

"My dear Esray, the old romantic idea of the disillusionized wife pinning a note of farewell on a pillow and stealing out penniless—at midnight, probably, and probably also into a snow-storm—is quite dead. Women need money. They need it more than men do. After an unfortunate marriage, when they are older, and sadder, and less fitted to fight the battle for existence, they need it more than ever. I'm not asking a favor. Don't imagine it. A share of your money, if we part, is rightfully mine. I've earned it. I haven't been your wife for eight years, Esray, but I've been a most useful business partner."

She spoke without a touch of heat. It made him seem common to himself,

and irritated him that his insults could not prevent her looking like a melancholy queen. Indeed, there was even genuine kindness in her gaze as she added: "Poor Esray, what on earth would you have done without my help? We needn't go into that. *You know.* Arrange things, then, so that I can get my liberty and a million dollars."

"Is that all? A million?" He gave a chuckle, rich in spite.

"You have ten—or is it twenty? I want one."

She had always been honest with him. That was one reason why he hated her, deeply and sluggishly hated her. If she had lied to him, his vanity would have been soothed. But she had been as candid as a straight, business partner.

When her sister had disappeared with Steven King, she had told him that, with Fanny gone, her chief reason for marrying him had vanished. She would have left him then, if he had wished it. After his riches came, she had even arranged to go. But he had felt helpless under the startling change in his life. He had begun to see that she was just the woman to be useful to him. She had been born with the social instinct that makes a leader. Unlike himself, she came of gentle people, and her residence in France had given her poise and comprehension. No other woman that he knew then had had these accomplishments, and in those days, when he had been simpler and more likable, he had been, also, shy with new friends. So he had implored her to stay as an adviser and aid-de-camp, under the title of wife; and she had agreed.

She had been splendid at first, coaching him and playing the big game with a feverish zest, slowly and surely landing him, each season making him a little more fashionably conspicuous. During this time, she had been satisfied with the stray letters that had fluttered in from her Sister Fanny at uneven intervals, from every part of the country, as she led her homeless life with her miscreant husband. A good deal of his money had been sent to Steven King to keep his mouth shut, and to keep him at a safe distance. Life had been pleasant enough until Claudia had received news of her sister's arrest and conviction—what he considered a logical outcome of such a marriage as hers had been!

From that time things had been miserable. Claudia, at first, had been obsessed by the thought of Fanny. It had been with the greatest difficulty that he had prevented her from trying to help her sister in a way to bring open disgrace upon him who was wholly innocent. He had to admit that, even then, she had schooled herself to temperateness and justice, and had done nothing to give a hint of the convicted woman's relationship to herself. She had settled into apathy, while continuing the soci-

ety woman's hard drudgery conscientiously.

But during the last year it had become intolerable, and she had asked him to let her go. She had told him that he could do without her now; that she knew there was one woman in their own set who had worn his gifts of pearls and sables, and who, once he was free, could be, for the asking, put into her place. She had implored him not to hold her. And yet he had, because, as is the case with all small natures, power over others was sweet to him. She wanted her freedom, but she wanted his money so that, once her sister was free, she could use it to make her happy. Should she go, he meant to pay back her indifference and her inescapable superiority to himself by giving her as little of it as possible. Should she stay, it would have to be on his terms. He meant to make those terms known to-night.

"A million?" He spoke musingly. "Huh! I've something to say about that. Will you sit down?"

She obeyed, watching him as he bruised out the light of his cigar in a copper bowl.

"I made up my mind to-day to tell you something at the very first opportunity. Your craze for America, intruded upon me to-night, makes *this* the opportunity." He came a little nearer; his small eyes twinkled. "I've a bit of news for you that will surprise you."

These last words seemed to nail her to the chair. The thought that swung out of her soul was like an electric lariat flung to Fanny in her far-off hiding place. Death seemed to fall on her heart as she waited for his next words.

"I've decided *not* to build at Newport, and *not* to lease the Charteris place *after* this year!"

The relief was as staggering as a blow. Her blood seemed to force its way through iron before it could flow normally again. This was his "news"—only this! Breathless, she sat without answering, bent over, her elbows on her knees, her heavy head held up by her hands.

"I mean to sell the New York house,

too." He smiled. "In fact—I mean to *live* in England."

She sat as before. She did not even shrug. This irritated him: "Well, what have you to say about it?"

"You're foolish," she said mildly, as she wiped her face. "You've a certain position in America. They won't like you in England, Ezra."

"You'll kindly call me by my name!" he cried furiously.

"I beg pardon. It slipped out."

"My stand is taken. You'll see your precious America about once in five years—if we stay together. If we don't—you'll get just what allowance the law will think right. It won't be much, because you have no children, and I've kept that letter you wrote me eight years ago in which you arranged our relations so nicely for yourself."

The rouge stood out in hard spots upon her tired face. She was weary of the wrangle. She had hoped he had decided to marry the woman of the pearls and sables, and have children to inherit his money. But he was only bent on sticking the pins of his degrading sordidness into her. Only for Fanny, how gladly she would walk out of his house and his life, taking whatever allowance he would be pleased to make.

Only for Fanny! It had always been so, since the days when she had gone without things herself that she might buy ribbons for her little sister's hair. Only for Fanny—who, in following the wild love born of young blood, had been led into Dorélike darkness, and made to drink from a black and bitter pool. After these thoughts of her sister, under which her heart melted, her husband's next words were like the profanation of something holy.

"As an English resident you will be finally separated from *Mrs. Steven King*." He said the name with a deriding chuckle. "I mean that brilliant family connection to end." She gave him one flaming look of rebellion and looked down again. "As it's only a year and a half now before her term ends—perhaps less—it is just as well that you know where I stand in this matter. Let us look at facts. You

have a sister whose methods—to put it mildly—made her a menace to society——"

"No!" she said crisply, without looking up.

"You *will* blink facts!" he cried, as if pained, but he was beginning to enjoy himself. "She was sent counterfeit money by her husband, and she used it. When she was arrested, it was found that she was making plans to clear out, had, in fact, bought a railroad ticket with some of the money, and had a box of counterfeiting tools on the premises that she was preparing to express to her husband, who was working his game farther West. This state of affairs isn't comprehensible to you unless you consider—and I ask you to do so sensibly—just how young and malleable she was, just what a coercing sort of a scoundrel King was. She didn't become a thief at a leap—but little by little, little by little. You note how reasonable I am?"

She did not reply, and he continued: "The fact that she had had, some time before this happened, a nervous illness, serious enough to keep her a long time in hospital, was made the most of by her counsel. He urged that she had been mentally irresponsible. Rot, my dear! She comes of a sound stock. Her illness was nothing more than a sort of hysteria from the dance that her admirable husband led her. Judges are getting pretty tired of that crook's dodge—nervous breakdown, melancholia, mental irresponsibility! It's an old whine—and it's *rot*."

Claudia sat perfectly quiet. She did not mean to antagonize him by argument—she needed his money. This was plain to him, but the thought that, if she had dared to let herself go, she would have torn him like a tigress guarding her young had some satisfaction in it. He was really amiable as he paced before her silent, crouched figure, flourishing his chubby hands and protruding his head with every emphasis.

"There are a good many cases like this, my dear Clo," he smiled. "When the mental-irresponsibility dodge does

not work, the crook is sent to jail. Your sister knew exactly what she was doing. She's where she deserves to be—no more, no less. This is a protection to us. No one is likely to probe into her disgrace and smear us with it. She's safe." Here he stopped short, expression and manner putting on an enamellike glaze. "I've no objection to your sending her money, but in every other way—now, and when she's free—she is to be wiped out"—he fluttered his hands in a final way—"dead."

Claudia stood up heavily, moistening her dry lips. "I've listened to you attentively. Good night."

"Answer me!" he snapped.

She looked at him in weary amazement. She was like a blank paper on which he had struggled to write in vain. "When Fanny is free we'll talk of this again. By that time, perhaps, you'll be ashamed of what you've said to-night."

"You mean," he muttered in a fury, "you'll identify yourself with her—after—"

"Not publicly—if you and I are together. But wherever I am, she'll be close to me! All I can do to comfort her, to make up for this terrible and unjust punishment, I shall do! *I am living only for that!*"

He looked after her in futile exasperation as she walked, plainly exhausted, to the door. "All right. You hug that dream! Time enough to settle that—almost two years more. But there's another thing. You may imagine that you'll be able to sneak off on visits to her. *I forbid it.* I'll have no risks run. If you slip out of New York, I'll follow you." He seized her arm. "Your promise that you won't go near that prison!"

Claudia wearily disentangled his fingers from her arm. "You are unnecessarily vehement and obvious. I had no idea of leaving New York except to go to Newport." She seemed to shed him like an irksome cloak, and went into her bedroom.

Her maid was asleep against the dressing table. She shook her stupidly and the girl began undressing her. As she stood so, the languid tears of one

who has worn weeping out slid from beneath her shut eyes. But as her fingers flickered about, and then closed fiercely upon a little satin bag sewed under the lace of her corset, light spread over her tortured face. The little bag, apparently only filled with a jasmine sachet powder, held the most precious thing in her life—a fragment of paper from Fanny's letter that gave detailed directions how to find her hiding place among the confusing angles of Greenwich Village.

CHAPTER VII.

WITHIN FOUR WALLS.

During the month that followed the arrival of Claudia's letter from Venice, Fanny became expert in deceit. She never left her rooms except at night, but to hide this fact from John Cross, Fergus, and Mrs. Murray, required constant foresight on her part.

She was naturally candid. There was not a grain of love of intrigue in her. She would have liked to have been able to say, while keeping her secrets locked within herself, that she shunned the New York streets as she would smallpox, and that she had a reason for it. But she knew that such candor would single her from the crowd, and Miss Onderdonk's description of how easily a reporter got scent of news, and how rapaciously he went on its trail, occurred to her continually. Having come to this decision, Fanny, like a general, arranged her tactics. She tried to seem as peacefully commonplace as possible, and never to be taken by surprise. She lied when it was necessary.

In consequence, she frequently wore her hat and gloves when she admitted Mrs. Murray or Fergus, as if she had just returned from a walk. She sometimes went into John's room with them on, and showed decided cleverness in acting the part of a woman tired from shopping. At other times, when Mrs. Murray wanted her to go out, she had "only just come in." Once, when a reporter had given John seats for a spe-

cial spring performance of "La Bohème," he had sent them in to her. She had found a "headache" useful, and had sent them down to Mrs. Murray.

Meanwhile, famished for air and exercise other than the walk at night allowed, her skin had taken on a sickly color. A heat wave had come early, and was torturing New York. These back rooms were as stifling as a greenhouse. It was impossible for a current of air to refresh them, unless she left the door wide open. She did this sometimes, a few moments at a time, but her nerves were troublesome until it was closed again and locked. She lost weight. Crescent-shaped, violet shadows showed under her eyes. A longing for breeze and space had begun to torment her. She slept badly. She would toss on her bed, that seemed to seethe in the motionless air, a verse of Swinburne's beating in her brain like a thin bell:

Ah, yet would God this flesh of mine might
 be
 Where air might wash and long leaves cover
 me,
 Where tides of grass break into foam of
 flowers,
 Or where the wind's feet shine along the
 sea.

Pictures of the open ways would rise before her and fill her with a gypsy frenzy. Two days, in particular, had a way of starting out at her from the girlhood that had ended at its beginning. One showed a sweep of deserted beach, strewn with wreckage thrown up by the gray, pettish sea; some men belonging to the life-saving station had made a bonfire, and its huge flames chuckled as they bent in the October gale. The other memory was of a wet, autumn wood, and of herself walking there with a dog she had loved; she wore a raincoat and an old hat, and as she walked, she lifted her face to the steady, stinging mist. She could fairly smell the sharp perfume from the dying vegetation, mixed with the smoke from heaps of burning leaves. The forest path ended in a blotch of mist.

These were her longings—always for the autumn, for rain, for the cold air of the short days, for the sea of storms and

danger signals. Her writing, too, bore marks of this shut-in, struggling spirit. A story on which she was working, in spite of heat and sleeplessness, was of stirring incident, starting grandly with a shipwreck, and continuing its way to an uncharted island in a lonely, tropical sea.

Her pleasantest hours were spent with John Cross. His rooms were cool. There the door was always open, shielded by a curtain of coarse Japanese crape, which, fastened at top and bottom, swelled like a sail in the draft. Fergus was a genius at making refreshing iced drinks, flavored with lime or pineapple. He had learned the secret of how to make sirocco heat bearable, and though the sun might burn hard on the balcony the rooms were always as dim as a cave, and the Japanese curtain at the door, sprinkled with lavender, gave the air blowing through it a spicy tang.

John was up now. He wore the thinnest of silky shirts made of Philippine pineapple fiber, belted flannel trousers, and, on the most torrid days, Japanese sandals. He looked more gaunt than when in bed, but the greenish malarial pallor was disappearing, and his eyes were bright and contented. His arm was out of bandages, and rested in a sling fashioned from a large black silk handkerchief. He went for short early walks every morning.

"I'm allowed three pipes a day," he told Fanny one afternoon, and grinned like an urchin. "That looks like business—eh? After I've taken iron and the other stuff for another fortnight, I'll get a punching bag and a pair of dumbbells. I'll have to pamper my left arm for the next six months, but I'll be an athletic wonder on my right side."

He was in joyous spirits. Fanny was deeply happy to see the radiance in his thin face, but she found it impossible to respond with animation. The night before there had been a thunderstorm of the electrical, terrifying sort encountered only in the tropics and the "temperate" United States, and her usual evening walk had been given up. This day of humidity and stifling torture had

followed. She was drained of strength. The clothes on her languid body were drenched. She felt as if her eyes had faded to the huelessness of glass. A constant, feverish thirst tormented her.

She had not lost actual sense of herself and her surroundings, and yet their reality had dimmed and objects had diminished when she felt John's fingers close around her wrist. "What's the matter, Fanny?"

She struggled forward and tried to twist herself from his hold.

"Nothing!" This was a wild, imploring sigh, and she fainted.

John did not fully realize what had happened until Fanny's arms slipped down lifelessly and her head hung sideways. He knelt beside her in fright, seized her with his free hand, and slipped his arm around her shoulder. She fell against him, a dead weight. Her breath went in ripples over his cheek.

There was a pause, made up for him of crowding heartbeats. He gazed in confusion at her deathlike face, as if seeing it for the first time. The look of one who, having casually opened a door leading from a dark room, finds himself staggered by a blaze of unexpected light beyond it, was in his rigid, wide-open eyes.

"Fanny! Fanny!" He spoke her name gently at first, then with yearning and reckless joy, while long-parched currents began to trickle over the rock that had been his heart.

This ecstatic disorder of ideas continued, as, in a man's awkward way, he did the stereotyped things prescribed for the rousing of swooning women. Using his one hand, he made Fanny as comfortable as he could by propping a pillow under her shoulder. He poured water from the red earthen bottle, and tried unsuccessfully to make her swallow some of it, clapped her hands, bathed her forehead, fanned her. All the time he made little sympathetic sounds as one does over a child or a sick animal. When nothing seemed of use, he dropped to one knee and propped her head on his arm. His lips were again close to her sculptured face.

"Fanny?" There was love under the alarm. "Can't you hear me?" and then, in a battling breath: "My sweet, my love! Look at me, speak to me!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"LOVE, THAT IS BLOOD WITHIN THE VEINS OF TIME."

John felt that he had gone clean mad for the moment. Then how wonderful was madness and how sweet! What it made of a dull life! What it made of a sick, lonely, and purposeless man! The joy and fire in his blood had made man's essential, from man's beginning, and turned him for a moment into an exultant savage craving the body and soul of this one woman. And yet not that only, for his hands were too reverent even to touch one of the damp hairs of the pale-gold net upon her forehead.

He yearned over her in pity, too. In wakeful moments, action and expression can mask the soul; sleep leaves it exposed, helpless. So Fanny, prone in John's arms, betrayed the wounds that life had left upon her. The patience on the young face belonged rightfully to age. The "blight" of which she had spoken was not elusive now—its iron touch had picked out every muscle. The downward droop of the full, bluish-white lids was poignant with dumb appeal. And John, his thin, fierce face flaming with pity, wondered about her.

What storms of circumstance had she bent under, gasped under, and risen from to renewed endurance? What furnace blasts of pain had, like a scorch, touched her youthfulness, devitalizing it? She had told him a little—of the lean years; of the husband whose memory was "horrible." He had not tried to fill in details, or to imagine what sort of man could have brutally used such a frail, appealing, winning creature as Fanny. But he did see clearly that the hurt had been a fearful one. He had often felt that she belonged more to those turbulent years in which she had suffered than to the monotonous present in which he had come to know her; that

her memories, on which he often saw her obsessed and cloudy gaze bent, were more real than her actual existence.

The thought bit in, now. Tenderness and generosity rose like a tide within him, followed by a rebellious craving for godlike power by which he might blot out all memory from Fanny, and make her life seem to begin from the hour they had met, as if he had created her for himself—his to guard and love—utterly his.

Fanny sighed, and, coming out of a fantasy made up of great heights, vast wildernesses, and wide seas, found herself looking into his eyes—into their great hunger. As her bewilderment lessened, her first movement was a retreat from him. There was terror in the way she drew back and attempted to stand up, but she wavered, and it became necessary for him to hold her. She felt the hard, excited throb of his heart against her arm. She felt his hand shake.

"By Jove, you gave me a fright! Fergus out—and only a one-armed man to help you, Fanny." He spoke jestingly, but under the lightness of the tone excitement quivered like a live wire. "Sit down again."

"I'm better. I'll go," she said, in a hurried breath.

"Go where?" he demanded. The look in his eyes was under even less control than his voice. It warmed her to a heady delight, yet frightened her through and through.

From the white weakness of her face a laugh flashed. "Home," she said. "There is such a place, you know, although it's natural you should forget it. Not content with paying you long visits, I go and faint all over your furniture."

He loved her for that laugh. It was like her to break the tension that both felt, that way.

"Sit down!" he commanded.

"No. I'm going."

He looked at her with mockery. "You seem now the obvious young woman terrified at finding herself in the rooms of a man. This is the first time that old bugaboo ever poked its

ridiculous head between us. The superannuated belief that a man may visit a lone woman in her lone home, and, as a matter of course, act the courteous gentleman, while if by any chance she stands in *his* home, alone with him, he at once becomes 'a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour,' I thought had been kicked out of the window by us. But"—he smiled, dreamily studying her—"you stand there looking at me as if I were the villain in a melodrama, and just as if you were going to say: 'Sir, unhand me!'"

"I must look very silly, then," Fanny said, and promptly sat down.

"Now you're your own delightful, sensible, intelligent self!" He stood above her, nodding thoughtfully. "But you need looking after."

"Was it a real faint?" she inquired languidly, as he went to the stand where the liquors stood. "And how long? I'm awfully interested. You see it was my first." She felt the need of continuing the trifling talk. She remembered what for a moment she had seen in John's eyes. She knew that, unless she steered through the next few moments with caution and delicacy, she would hear irrepressible, passionate words, and friendship—the only thing possible between them—would be ended.

John came to her with a small glass of brandy. "Don't have any doubts about your collapse. It was a wonder! You seemed to weigh as much as the Venus de Milo—and looked like her. Now get this down."

He sat before her and watched her as she sipped the burning fluid, laughing at her when she winked hard over it.

"It'll set your blood running as if sparks had got into it," he said, and the threatening tenderness was again rioting in his tone. "It will take that gray-paper look from your face." He bent forward quickly, his elbow on his knee. "What a blind ass I've been not to see how this weather has been grilling you! It's as bad as Manila! You've been too much in the sun. Were you out today, too?"

"Not to-day," she said, without look-

ing at him. The constant deceit was becoming wearisome.

"Anyway, you're completely done up. Now, Fanny, be good enough to regard me as John Cross, M. D. I want to feel your pulse." She made a faint resistance, but he lifted the lace from her wrist with professional gravity, and laid his fingers on the faintly veined flesh.

"As I thought," he said, after a pause, "faint and furiously fast—now a beat missed—now I can scarcely feel it at all." He drew down the lace and handed back the arm as if returning something detached from her. For a moment he paced before her in meditation. "You are to leave New York," he said conclusively.

"Am I? Might I be told when?" She felt better. Her smile was piquant and disobedient.

"The day after to-morrow. To-morrow you can shop and straighten up your affairs. Fergus will pack for you."

"And then what happens to me, please?"

"Then you are to go to the mountains in Vermont. My doctor has found a place for me, but as I can't get away from violet rays for a few weeks longer, you shall go first."

As she did not speak, but lay back in the chair, openly amused, he continued: "When you get up there, you can look about for some place for me, near you. And I shouldn't wonder, Fanny," he said, pausing before her, "if we'd take walks together, and study botany, and"—the dangerous warmth was in his voice and look again—"watch the stars—even the moon!"

She sat forward jerkily. "You ought to write stories. I try to, but my imagination is puny beside yours."

"This means that you refuse to do what I ask?" he inquired gravely.

"Enchanting," she sighed lightly and stood up; "but not for me, unfortunately. May I go home now, doctor, and lie down?"

"You are not to treat what I say this way." She was astonished at the steely quality of the quiet tone. His

mouth was severe, his eyes bright and cold. He was on the instant unconsciously an officer, briefly giving a command. This thought prompted her next impulsive words:

"I know now how you looked in the Philippines!" she said, with delight, a smile flashing over her face.

"What do you mean?" he asked, in a crisp, conservative tone.

"Do you know that you are ordering me about? You're not a doctor; you're an officer!" She made him a mocking little salute after the fashion of Fergus'.

Instead of meeting her mood, the darkest expression she had ever seen crossed his face and twisted it nervously.

"Did I ever tell you I was an officer in the Philippines?" he asked coldly.

"No, but in that column and a half about you in *The Lantern*, two weeks ago," she said, in self-defense, "you were described that way. It said you acted so splendidly—"

"I see. You were misinformed. But please don't quote that newspaper rubbish to me ever again." He became his poised self, even looking appealingly at her. "I told you before that what I did, any man worth his salt as a soldier would have done when the opportunity appeared. To continue about myself, let me make it known to you this, once and for all time—in the Philippines I wasn't riding chargers and leading men. I was not an officer, nor was I treated as one. For a good part of the time I was a miserable, inconspicuous dog, in vermin-infested khaki, and with hands covered with eczema. And I obeyed orders. I didn't give any except"—he folded his arms and looked up at the ceiling—"except to an old, blind, half-scalped monkey that I rescued from a Chinaman who was going to fry him for his dinner."

His face grew dreamy with a reminiscent affection. "Poor, old Pedro! He got in among the surgeon's medicines, ate a pawful of calomel as *hors d'œuvres*, followed this up with a pawful of sulphonal tablets, and made his dessert of a pawful of strychnine." He

smiled broadly at her. "Need I say that Pedro *died*? He gave a short falsetto shriek like a French locomotive, shot twenty feet into the air, and came down as stiff as a bar of iron."

A touch of sternness came back to his tone. "Pedro—except during the short, latter time when I was a sergeant—was the only one, Fanny, who took orders of any sort from me in the Philippines. As for the *Lantern* reporter who wrote about my 'exploits' and talked of my 'Napoleonic temperament,' and a lot more beastly rot that made me seem an ass—I'd like to wring his neck! Fergus has his orders—if that bounder ever knocks at my door again, to kick him down the stairs." He towered over her and became on the instant a very tender protector. "All this is unimportant. Will you please go to the farmhouse in the mountains?" he pleaded.

She looked at him wistfully, but shook her head.

"If I beg you to go as a favor to me, because"—he drew a deep breath—"because you've grown to be a very precious item in my life, and I want great care taken of you—then will you go? And, Fanny, if you need help—let me help you. Please do?"

Her heart gave such a burning, stifling beat that just at first she could not speak. Oh, to be able to give herself to this happiness, this sheltering will! She put the dream from her; her calm voice gave no hint of it.

"I wish I could please you," she said sincerely. "You think I can't afford to go, but you're wrong. I have plenty of money." She stopped, and then said, in a reluctant way: "I find I must tell you a secret. I'm waiting here to see my sister. I loved her—and I haven't seen her for ten years. When she really comes, the happiness will be almost more than I can bear. I expect her any day, now. I never come in to see you without leaving a notice on the outside of my door, saying that information can be had of me from Mrs. Murray, for I always tell her when I come here, and she would call me. You understand? And please"—she went on hesitatingly

—"don't speak of my sister even to Fergus. I'd rather not. But you see why I can't leave New York."

Angry voices were heard in the hall, and John had only time to press Fanny's hand understandingly before Fergus entered, a package under his arm.

"I got them all, sir," he said breathlessly as, trembling and excited, he hastily locked the door. "That's to keep out a reporter," he explained, as he placed the package on the table.

John gave him a puzzled look. Fergus had the look of one dazed by a bad fright. "What's wrong?" John asked; "what about the reporter?"

"Oh, it's an idiot that thinks you've nothing to do, sir, but recite answers to his questions. And the heat's terrible. My hat's like a wet sponge." He pointed to the package without meeting John's eyes. "You'll find them all right, sir." Wiping his pallid face he walked slowly into his room.

"Something's happened," John said to Fanny, adding gayly: "Don't go until you see this." He untied the string around the package. "Haven't you felt the crying need of a post office, so that we can talk when it isn't possible to visit? See here." He lifted a wicker basket, with a sliding top to it, and made to hang on a hook. "Into this the letter is popped. But in order to proclaim who the writer is, I had a brilliant thought." He took out three small silk flags. "First—the Stars and Stripes. When there's a letter in the box from you, Fanny, you will be good enough to place the stick of the flag in this little iron slide and let it wave. I'll do the same with this Union Jack. And, so that Fergus wouldn't be out of it, I let him buy an 'Erin go Bragh.' In this way, one look will tell who has written the letter."

Fanny expressed herself as enchanted with the idea. Laughing like school children, they fastened the box to the point of the balcony rail just midway between the houses, and laid the flags in the covered wooden slide attached to it. Each was to have a small key to the lock.

"I was several days planning this,"

John said joyfully; "and Fergus was just as long finding a workman to put it together."

"It fits in with the new complexion of things, doesn't it?" Fanny asked, with a demure smile.

"*That's* a cryptic remark—if you like!"

"Well, in spite of my unconventional visits to you when you were sick, and they were a necessity, I'm very usual in my point of view. In future, *you* shall pay *me* visits in the orthodox way."

"I'll go like a shot. But I don't like your talking like a young ladies' book of etiquette," he said, with an appearance of sadness. "What has the post box to do with it, however? You don't—in sudden horror—"you *don't* mean that I'm to wait for a regulation, *posted* invitation?"

"Just that!" Fanny called gayly, crossing to her window.

"Well, I shan't!"

"You shall. Our manners have been dreadful. From today we'll mend them. I'll write you to-night, Mr. Cross, and give you an invitation to call upon me. Good-by!" she said, laughed over her shoulder, and hurried into her own place.

What she did there after a half hour's thought, during which she sat helplessly in the big chair with eyes staring before her, was most curious. She went to her trunk, took out an old wallet, and from its flattened center drew a piece of printed paper. This was a newspaper paragraph. Sitting at the table, she spread out her arms so that she rested heavily, as with shrinking, but stern, eyes she read it:

... It was the decision of the medical examiners that, while the prisoner had but recently recovered from a long illness, during which she had suffered from intense

mental depression, there were no salient evidences of a present mental condition that could amount to absolute irresponsibility of either intention or action. Her replies, while short—often but "yes" and "no"—showed a definite grip of the subject on which she was questioned . . . Her sentence to prison was for four years. She received it indifferently. To the last, she did not disclose any portion of her history, or give any clew by which the gang her husband and she worked with could be traced . . .



John felt pleasure in being able to recognize her as a type.

The words sank in and seared. The horror that they revived—a place of specters where the beating of the wings of the furies measured the hours—became clearer with every second, until she lay across the table, the weight of utter hopelessness upon her.

"It's just as well now, at the very beginning, to make myself remember how it is with me," her thoughts sighed through her; "I could so easily forget everything but *him*."

Fergus was not to be seen when John returned, and the curtain was drawn before the door of his room. John filled his pipe and waited for him, listening. There was not a sound. He crossed the room very quietly, and saying "Fergus?" pulled the curtain aside. It was as he had expected. Fergus was seated on his bed, one hand clutching his shoulder. His head was drooping.

"Come here," said John, and the big fellow, his eyes lowered, stumbled out like a driven sheep. "I knew there was something wrong. Are you sick?"

"No," he answered, bewildered.

"What is it, then? What's the matter with you? What's the matter with your shoulder?"

"It was that reporter that was here the other day. I met him in the lower hall and told him to get out. He wouldn't. He came up and ye—well, we rolled over each other until I did manage to fling him out. But before he went he told me——" The sentence absolutely ended. He stood like a block, staring at John. "You've got to know it, Mr. Cross! There's no keeping it back. It's out, sir," he said feebly, yet with fierce pain, as he flung up his hands; "*the old story's out!*"

He waited for a reply, but John stood like stone, the pipe halfway to his lips.

"The papers have it, sir—or they *will* have it. That fellow faced me with it." His lips quivered like a child's. "Mr. Cross, I'm sore and I'm sick to think of it. I'd rather my face was laid open by his fist than have this news to tell you!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE TIDE CREEPS TO JOHN'S DOOR.

John sat down. "What did he say?" he asked in a dull voice.

"He said he wanted to see you. I told him that if you saw him, you'd horsewhip him for the drivel he'd written about you in that last interview with you—putting words into your mouth that you'd never said. Then," Fergus concluded, "he told me what he'd come for—said he knew it was true—but wanted to give you a chance to *white-*

wash it—oh, that was the word that made me want to throttle him!"

"How did he put it?" John asked, in the same dead way.

"I couldn't say the words," Fergus said, a shrinking in his look.

"Just—*how?*" The exact words, please."

Fergus looked away from him. "He said—there was a well-supported rumor that some years ago you'd been in the English army, sir—an officer, in the Indian service—that you'd been dismissed for cowardice—in the face of the enemy. He gave the name of the army post, the name of your colonel. Oh, Lord, Mr. Cross!" he broke off, turning, "to hear that fellow speak Colonel Onslow's name—how it brought it all back!"

He went on laboredly: "He said that he had no ill feeling against you, and that you'd made good in the Philippines—but that he must have the facts in this story—he was after facts." Here Fergus blazed and trembled. "'Facts?' I said. 'You think Mr. Cross would speak of his life to you? You think he'd show you his heart for you to stick your pen in it?'" said I.

"He tried to shoulder past me. I had two reasons for not letting him in, knowing Mrs. Barrett was sitting with you, sir. 'It will be better for him not to make an enemy of me,' he said.

"After I'd pitched him down the stairs, I said to him over the banisters, by way of advice: 'If you should put your questions to him, he wouldn't make an *enemy* of you,' I said. 'He'd make a *jelly* of you!'"

John flung his head back and broke into a startling peal of laughter. "*That* conciliated him, of course!"

"I did wrong?" Fergus asked in concern, and searched his face.

"Perhaps not," John answered as he struck a match. "I hardly think it will matter. They'll be sure to treat this news the way it will pay best. As my laurels are new, and my disgrace old, they'll keep the wreath on me, I'm sure. Having gone to such infinite pains to dress me up as a hero," he smiled, "they can't very well take away my nice,

fresh clothes before I've even played in them. They'll merely mark me down as a hero somewhat damaged."

He made himself comfortable in the huge cane chair. Fergus noticed that he was paler and unusually thoughtful, and his anxiety became torturing.

"You're not going to fret, Mr. Cross?" he quavered. "Oh, sir, maybe it's just as well to get finished with it. 'Twas sure to come out! I often wondered why it didn't before."

"So did I," said John. "But it can't hurt me any more, Fergus."

They looked at each other. Into the mind of each came the thought that this was the first time, since the day they had left India together, that this subject had been spoken of between them. There had been glances and hand pressures in some of the strong hours of their lives, but never the actual words that could galvanize a disastrous thing.

"You understand—don't you?" John asked.

"Yes," said Fergus very softly; "it's that you've *paid* for it, sir."

John nodded. "That's it. Once we've paid, we cease to be petitioners and the case is closed. So don't let it bother you, Fergus. They can say what they like—*now*."

Fergus went behind the screen and began to prepare the dinner. While he stirred mayonnaise for the cold salmon, and the piercing fragrance of cut cucumber filled the air, memory, in the closing of his eyes, swung John back almost a dozen years.

A wild, hilly part of India, edging on Turkestan, spread before him; an army outpost on the farthest fringe of British possession, where wild, bearded tribes prostrated themselves before their white-faced conquerors, but with murder just back of their smiles. Strange that, by a curious mental caprice, one pleasant and quite inconspicuous day should start up in such living clearness before him! It was a memory that had constantly occurred to him whenever he had looked back—perhaps because it showed him at the very crown of his happy young man-

hood, before doom had struck for him and shadow swallowed him. All the minutiae of the scene fitted in with Meissonierlike accuracy.

He saw a winding, yellow road; the bushy-headed palms rustled high above it in the burning sun; a fringe of herons, with tucked-in heads, stood asleep by a deeply sunk pool shadowed by a great pyramidal rock; off on a rise, a roofless temple, with cinnamon-colored walls, gaped to the sky that was a dark-blue, burning square.

There was a rush of horses down a hill—he fairly heard the descent of the loosened earth and stones—and three men, in white drill riding suits and pug-garees, came into sight upon the yellow road—Winky Phillips, Peter Roof, and himself. They eased into a trot. Over his own saddle hung the body of a young tigress; all were smoking; Winky, between puffs, was singing a song remembered from the "halls":

"White wings, they never grow weary.

They carry me cheerily over the sea;

Night comes, I long for my dearie.

I'll spread out my white wings and sail home to thee."

Singing, they went at an easy gait out of sight.

John gazed and gazed at the self of that radiant time. There he was, a lieutenant in a cavalry regiment—gay, popular, overconfident, of almost insolent light-heartedness, and with his thirtieth birthday still remote! Golden youth! Golden days! Across what awful years he looked at them.

He could not follow the reverie to the hour of his fall. He balked at its anguish. It was an old wound that could always bleed at a touch. Some sorrows are like that. He opened his eyes and stared over the blazing bowl of his pipe at the big doors dividing Fanny's rooms from his.

Not since the happy time so clearly recalled had he felt the craving of body and spirit, combined, for a woman as he had to-day. He had not lost faith in women; they had simply gone the way of other joys, when life, as by a volcanic seizure, had been twisted out of its course, and he had found his back

turned forever upon everything familiar and dear. His hand curved over his eyes as his head sank lower, and brooding gripped him again.

He saw himself now a disgraced man. There were ghost pictures of long exile in South America, of filibustering in Cuba. These passed, and one endured showing him an insignificant unit among the rank and file of the first American regiment in the Philippines.

Though only seven years older than the young hunter of his first vision who sang blithely of "White Wings" as he rode, he was an absolutely different being. He had become human mechanism, the power to love, dead; the power to hate, as well; almost gone, too, the power to pity.

In the first years of his anguish, he had tried to inflame himself with liquor, but nature had been kind in making him physically incapable of obtaining stimulation through drunkenness; excesses had brought nightmare sicknesses that tempted him to suicide. So he had escaped demoralization from that source; but memory, left unclouded, had a razor edge.

The only women he knew were such as came a common soldier's way; the little brown women of the hot, southern islands that some of the lonely soldiers had taken as permanent companions had existed for him in the most transitory fashion; stupid children, squat, heavy dolls—they had left him only weariness of them and disgust of himself. But just as a disabled ant will keep on building, building, he had lived through the duties of each day, so numb that he did not feel their hardships, so indifferently blind that he had not seen their ugliness. For years he had breathed, and eaten, and worked, and slept; and during that time he had not been for an hour a *living* man.

The light grew faint in his pipe as he followed the thread of thought to the first throb of awakening from his dull despair.

He saw a hot December day in the island of Luzon. It was a time of

massacres by the Tagalos upon the Spanish and Chinese; of ambushes and assassinations; of guerrilla attacks upon the Americans by strong, generally unseen, forces of insurgents. On this day, so treasured by memory, he was one of a detachment of infantry which left for a week's reconnoitering in one of the northern provinces. It was humid, stifling, and a steady rain fell day and night. The men had been in the downpour and the mud for many weeks, in thin, tropical suits that were stained and faded; their faces were skull-like; their glassy eyes told of the sluggish fever nibbling into their bones.

The advance was made at first through dense hill jungles, where they had to climb hand over hand, or slide down, holding on to the brush for protection; and afterward through vast swamps, fairly sewn with mantraps, where the grass was twelve feet high, and so thick that after two yards it rose with the opaqueness of a solid wall.

His old comrades—like specters they clustered around him. Most clear of all was little Wainwright, of whom he had been especially fond; whose young face was like a laughing girl's, and who could sing "My Old Kentucky Home" in a seraph's voice that made tears shine on the leathery cheeks of big, rough men. John remembered the bullet that had come singing through the grass, breaking a phrase on young Wainwright's lips and sending him down like a log with half his head blown off.

After that, as the boyish body had been carried forward on a litter, and the shots now had come peppering from all sides, a conviction had come to John that his knowledge of Indian jungles and swamps could be of good service here. This had grown from a dull idea to a desire, and he had found himself asking to be allowed to cut a trail. After gaining permission, he had given up his rifle to the shivering native worker and taken his bolo instead. He recalled how a new feeling, which had resurrection in it, had begun to send pricks of fire about his heart and spine.

He had gone well in advance of the detachment, and had cut with such a

will that the column had been able to proceed much faster. He had known that all about him the hidden enemy watched, that he was a marked man. Shots had fallen near him, had flown over him; two had struck him, but without serious results. He had heard the musketry of the Americans behind him as they fired well past him, but quite at random, since the insurgents had taken the precaution of using smokeless powder.

Once, what he had thought was a dead Filipino had suddenly sprung at him, made a pass at his head with a huge bolo, and had then flashed into the grass with the incredible swiftness of a snake. Sweating and exhausted as he was, it had been ecstasy to follow the man, to find himself struggling with two, killing one, while the other was captured. And for this chance, which had flung up a new dawn upon the sky of his life, he had paid but cheaply—merely with a slashed shoulder and a twisted wrist.

There had been more and more serious fighting that day, but the remainder of the experience trailed away into smoke before him; not so the closing lines of the report made by his captain:

For generally gallant and meritorious conduct throughout the march, I recommend Corporal John Cross. He displayed courage, when, after Private Wainwright had been killed, while firing was incessant, and knowing he would run into the enemy at any minute, he went well in advance of the company, into the almost impassable swamp, and cut a trail that greatly facilitated our progress.

They had told him afterward that he had done a big thing, a fine thing. His colonel had had him in his tent a whole night. They had smoked and talked, companions as never before. The next day he had been made a sergeant.

At first, he had resisted this most usual mark of approbation. Only when the impatient colonel had made it plain that the promotion gave better opportunities for action to a soldier, had he consented to receive the change of straps upon his arm. For woven with his new longing to redeem himself, there had been a determination that gradually had become a rock foundation in

his nature—to act without thought of reward. For his own, secret self, to *wipe out*—there was majesty in that. But to *build* upon what he might be able to do, or to accept honors for it, was to be *paid*. He *would take nothing*. This became a sacred obsession with him.

After this he had felt hope again; he had seen hope for him in Fergus' eyes—Fergus, who had been then his comrade in the ranks. Daily, the desire for rebirth had grown stronger. While inwardly he had smiled sneeringly at the judgment of men, he had waited for the chance that would make him truly know himself. God! God! Great God! To be made clean in *his own sight*! Nothing but that! If this could be— It had been his prayer day and night.

And when, during the autumn just past, the chance had come to him, with almost certain death looming beyond it, he had given himself to it, expecting to be made one of that vast, humble, silent number whose carefully marked and hidden graves were rapidly edging Filipino roadsides and river banks.

His second feat had become a conspicuous bit of army history. As he had told Fanny, the experience had by some chance come under special newspaper notice, and had been written up in all the colors of the palette. The occurrence ran before him now in a series of pictures dim in blood haze and smoke.

There he was, one of a scouting party of less than one hundred men, which, under a captain, started for a three days' trip through a dangerous territory. When about four miles from a Filipino village, the enemy—afterward proven to have outnumbered the Americans four to one—opened fire on them from the thicket-covered hills. At a most important moment, while the Americans were answering the fire, the captain was wounded, a bullet passing through his neck and mouth. When he came to consciousness, he was being carried in John's arms to the shelter of a rice dike about fifty yards back. The lieutenant was placed in command.

John put up a blanket to protect the captain and stood outside of this shelter, making good use of his rifle. Shots passed through the dike and shattered the blanket. Still John stood erect, blazing away in a cloud of smoke, while shots poured upon the spot where it was known the leader lay.

After a time the enemy was silenced. This gave the Americans a chance to plan what was best to be done. They were sure the insurgents would return, increased in number, for it was well known that the woods were swarming with demoniac tribesmen. Meanwhile, with the captain useless for action, only able to whisper, and with an appalling number of wounded and dead men on their hands, their chances were all on the side of having to surrender, unless reinforcements and medical aid could be had with dispatch. John, with six men under him, was commissioned to carry this message to headquarters, some eighteen miles away.

His course lay directly to a wide, rushing, deep river, on the opposite shore of which there was a mountainous gorge known to be alive with insurgents. By going down this swiftly moving stream on a raft which had been constructed during the march of the detachment forward, and which had been left hidden in the bushes, their errand could be accomplished in time. But when John reached the spot where the raft had been left, there was no trace of it. A hunt for it, for half a mile up and down the river, was fruitless. But they reached a spot from which they could see on the other bank a number of native boats called *bancos*.

How to reach them? The tumultuous river was dangerous even to the most accomplished swimmer; firing, that at first had been weak from the thickets bordering the other shore, was becoming continual, and a man swimming slowly in the open, nearer and nearer the ambushed enemies, would offer an easy target. Nevertheless, they saw that unless they could in some way reach the boats quickly without expending their strength too utterly, they were likely to be wiped out.

They answered the fire with surer marksmanship, while they searched desperately for a bridge that was remembered somewhere close to this spot. But at this point, an imperative and dire delay was necessary—two men were killed, and to save their bodies from the mutilation sure to follow, they were given to the flood. A brother of one of the dead men, after gazing with wild eyes at the waters hurtling the bodies on, gave a weak screech and, leaping into the jungle, was never seen again.

The remaining three, following John, came at last to what was left of the bridge—a mass of charred timber, still smoking in places and jutting in others, and reaching only a little more than halfway across the flood. There it loomed, a forlorn hope, but their only one. Without a second's hesitation John rushed for it.

Just here, he recalled an occurrence that had not been mentioned in his report—one regarding which no word had ever passed his lips, so sacred, so pitifully comprehensible it was to him! Of the other three men, two had hung back. The wild water across which they must creep and then swim slowly, straight into the face of almost certain death, had unhinged them. Their eyes were as wild as the deserter's. They weren't afraid, they said. They were willing to die. But this crossing, which meant failure anyway, would be slow torture, and they couldn't face it. Rather than do it, they would ram the muzzles of their guns into their mouths, and blow their heads off.

With his hand on the shaking rail John paused in pity at their almost demented faces. "Boys," he said quietly, "I am an Englishman. Won't *you* come?" And with their senses swinging back into place, they gave a cry and followed him.

He clambered over the charred and sagging structure, and swam the distance between it and the bank, from which the insurgents, yelling like condors, sent down their greetings in Mauser bullets, native arrows, and heavy stones.

Another whirling moment dizzied even memory. Private Mallory, whose progress had been slower than his companions, while still almost in midstream, had received a bullet in his back. He was going down for the second time when John, who had gained the bank, plunged in again, reached him, and managed to bring him to the shore.

John's breath broke as he thought of it all. What a wild game it had been—life and death, the players; the odds always on the pale marksman's side. To struggle on, though terribly wounded, to go with teeth set and deliver the message that had been carried through horrors that had become almost harlequin, although they had been compounded of blood, pain, desertion, and death—this had been but part of the play.

When he could pause to consider himself, it was found that a bullet had grazed a lung and passed out through his shoulder; that the flesh was ripped from his thighs; and that his left arm, which sagged helplessly, and was tearing with pain, had a jagged, protruding bone.

Here, too, memory showed him the closing words in his captain's report of this engagement:

I urgently recommend Sergeant John Cross for heroism of the highest character. The arrival of reinforcements in time to save even a small portion of my command was due to this soldier's courage, which did not falter even when he was himself fearfully wounded. To his coolness in sheltering me and firing upon the enemy, while himself in an exposed position and under heavy fire, I undoubtedly owe my life. His crossing into the enemy's country over the ruins of the burned bridge, and his saving Private Mallory from drowning, while almost exhausted himself, were also examples of the most sublime courage. Privates O'Toole, Morgan, and Mallory, who continued with him to the end of this most perilous journey, I also recommend for the most meritorious conduct.

After this there floated to John, on the waves of thought, pictures of long, gray, weary hospital days—how long, how gray! He had almost died—yet had lived—was living now to think about it all over his pipe, his eyes on Fanny's door.

As his pulses quieted and the hopelessness of India and the glory of Luzon both vanished, his heart went out to her—to her alone. During the months since he had won the triumphant inner knowledge that had purged him of psychological leprosy, he had, in spite of illness, known a deep, redeeming content that had seemed happiness. He had often named it so—until to-day. To-day, in the blaze of another feeling, his sense of well-being had sickened like candlelight in a full sun.

Was this love? He wanted to believe it, to cry: "A miracle! A miracle!" The wonder of it made him timid to trust it. He knew what irresistible hypnotism could lie in sex attraction, often, when analyzed, no more than some endearing mannerism—a trick of glance, a curve of mouth, or the cadence of a voice. The ashes in the pipe that hung forgotten from his lips grew gray while he pondered, his eyes on Fanny's door.

And the answer came in a way that settled doubt. Passion ebbed, but did not leave him cold. In its place, a protective tenderness rose in him like a sea and surged between him and Fanny. There was not a thought of self in the feeling. It was as pure as the instinct to shelter a child. His face had a look of lasting strength, a guardian light. *Love!* The word murmured in his brain like the sea on a still night, and with it some lines of Henley's:

And they who go with the word unsaid,
Though they walk with the living,
Are damned and dead—

—as he had been, until this hour.

CHAPTER X.

DREAMING.

The dinner was as good as the best Fergus had ever prepared, but John ate only a little of it. Although he was nerved to face the impending disclosure and did not fear it, there was repugnance in the thought that the hidden sorrow of his life would be common talk to-morrow. He did not want Fanny to read of it in cold type. It

angered him that by any chance it should come to her knowledge except through him.

He longed to be with her. But for her illness that afternoon, and his realization that she had then mutely forbidden him to tell her what he felt, he would have gone to her and eased his heart. This being impossible, he was urged to go out into the streets for air, for space. The walls seemed to press against him; the patch of luminous, evening green glittering above the houses beckoned to him. After an absent-minded ten minutes at the table, he stood up.

"It's stifling here. I can't eat tonight. But I wish, Fergus, you'd put some of these good things on a tray and take them in to Mrs. Barrett."

"I'll do it, sir." Fergus ventured to add a suggestion in a voice that he tried to make absolutely blank: "But maybe Mrs. Barrett would be glad to have you go in yourself, sir, for companylike. The little lady is not well at all. I've noticed that for days back."

"She'll be much better keeping quiet," John said briefly. "I think a walk will help me to sleep."

He got into his street clothes, filled his pipe, tucked his stick under the bandaged arm, and went out.

The halls and stairways of the old house affected him unpleasantly tonight. They were streaked with the summer dust. Beyond the open, battered colonial doorway, with its murky side lights and glimpse of newel posts, scantily dressed children were playing, some clambering on the doorstep. The poverty of the place came at him like an ugly grin.

In the streets, the impression was supported. Privacy was flung overboard in a frantic effort to get relief from the stewing humidity, and front doorways were filled with pale, languid groups. Mrs. Murray's lower window, with its sign, "Modes—Fit Guaranteed," was wide open; and John could see the owner's intensely pale face bending over a machine whose whirl reached him as if it were a sullen groaning from the worker's soul.

The old German who had the front parlors on the floor with Fanny, and whose long windows were filled with new and old musical instruments, sat in his shirt sleeves on the balcony, tapping at a violin case on his knee, while from the dim interior came groans of "Oh, oh, oh," from instruments that were being mended.

His coming to Greenwich Village had been a sick man's caprice. The cab that had carried him and Fergus from the transport to a hotel had come through this section of the town. The named, twisting streets, and small, orderly houses had reminded him of sober nooks in London. Later, he had remembered it, and had said to Fergus, "Get me out of this hotel. Try to get rooms in that quiet, old neighborhood I liked. Put the stuff in them that's in the packing cases. Don't talk to any one about it, and keep people off."

He had come on a bitterly cold day, when the wind had swept the streets clean, and the people were housed. The place had been at its best then. Tonight it was at its worst. Alert as he was for Fanny's welfare, the thought of her in the stifling back rooms, while the packed streets teemed with dejected humanity, offended him. He could afford better quarters, and so could she. If she still refused to leave New York, she must at least change to the open, hilly part of the city, and to a better house.

"I'll insist on her changing," he thought.

The word "insist" pulled him up in his musings. He had to face the question that, until now, had danced upon his dream like a black speck upon sunny water. This interest in Fanny's future belonged only to the man she loved. Was he, or would he be, that man? She had been a most sympathetic neighbor, and a fascinating comrade. But she had never in the faintest way mutely invited love from him, as even the shyest of women can make her unexpressed selection. Neither had she given him her confidence. He knew nothing about her. To his direct question, she had told him that her husband

was dead, but this did not prove that there was not somewhere another man beloved by her.

Vanity had long ago perished in him. He had been in the habit of thinking of himself as "done for," "a man that was." Except for its reconstructive elements, its wiping out of the old stain, the fame that had turned him into a newspaper hero had been an irritation. He had only a small income, no social position, not even a country. Would she love him? For a moment, as he sauntered in the hot, moist dusk, he tasted failure.

Then, in the burning, masterful demand that wins its way, his doubts were swept aside. There was no compounding by which love could be made logical. It had a way of coming into being for as many different reasons as there are weeds in the field, or for no reason at all. Fanny might give him her heart and soul, no matter what he was. Dear, adorable women—God bless them!—had from the beginning of time divinely loved men who had even less to give than he. On the very trail of this thought, he would have gone to her if he could, have taken her little hand, filled his eyes with the charm of her pale, wistful face, and have uttered the simple words that are as old as earth: "I love you. I want and need your love."

He had been walking very slowly. By this time he had reached a street about a quarter of a mile from his home. This had lost completely any likeness to the old town, and was used altogether for business. On one whole side of it, and a part of another, a large and flourishing brewery extended. A line of horseless trucks stood banked together for the night along the curb. The big factory doors were closing. Faint daylight, with shadows forming in it, gave the street a seclusion that attracted John. He turned into it and strolled to the farther end, which gave on a small square.

Here, in astonishment, he came almost to a dead pause. Well hidden

among the line of trucks, a brougham stood. It was an exquisite thing—a woman's dainty, perfect toy, very small, of dark-blue wood with silver trimmings, and with a silky, pale-blue shimmer from the interior. The coachman was slender, dark, and foreign looking, with a sharply cut, Dantelike face. He sat motionless, staring steadily ahead.

John approached slowly, the convalescent's interest in trifles aroused. As he came quite level with the brougham, he saw that there was a woman in it. She was just in the act of stepping out. The light was dying, and her clothes were dark and plain, but, nevertheless, he received an impression of elegance and completeness.

John felt pleasure in being able to recognize her as a type. He had known her sort in India and England in the old days; later, among the officers' visitors in Manila, he had seen her in Luneta Park during the hour of the evening drive—the human diamond, polished and pointed by every device of art, and resting upon velvet under glass.

She had closed the door with one hand. In the other she held what, in the dimness, was to him only a white splash until, as she moved, the rich fragrance of gardenias reached him. Her face was screened by a white, webby veil, covered with such an intricate lace pattern as made it an effective mask.

"Carlos?" she said softly. The man turned to listen, but not more sharply than John did at the sound of her voice. "Drive to lower Fifth Avenue and wait there. Don't come back here for two hours. When you do, wait exactly where you are."

The coachman touched his hat and resumed his immobile pose. The woman, with a beautiful, free step, swung around the corner quickly. John stood gazing after her. He had just heard Fanny's voice—the same, slow, soft *contralto*, with a piquantly sharp vibration slurring it.

"Fanny's sister!" The certainty stirred a hazy alarm in him.

This rich woman!

ON COURAGE

By Edwin L. Sabin

THE vast majority of us will scramble to pay a dollar and a half to hear a hero lecture from a platform, when we feel no elation at all in discussing weather or politics with him, for a nickel, during a ride downtown; we will spend two hours craning on a crowded corner to see him trundled past, when we do not raise our eyes from our paper to see him enter the house next door; we look over the head of our neighbor who wears his medals on his heart, to kotow to the stranger who wears his medals on his coat.

Courage? Certainly we admire courage, and courage makes the hero. But courage is a broad quality, and there are far more heroes and heroines than are exploited by history, the periodicals, and the lecture circuit. As for me, I'd like to see some of these well-known heroes who have braved death by land and sea—I'd like to see them when they come home to a cold dinner on a dark day, or when they have indigestion, or when the collar of the new coat rides the neck and the tailor cannot fix it. Courage is a jewel of many lights and facets; and, like the ruby in the rough or the turquoise in the matrix, is not always to be recognized by the seeker.

I tell you, if every hero and heroine in our town wore a medal for his or her courage, the daily streets would resemble a reunion of all the honorable and patriotic societies of the world lumped together. If, I say, every hero wore his heart upon his sleeve, we would bare our heads to the fat boy who delivers our meat, and in the path of the pale little woman across the street, we would spread our garments that they might be glorified by the touch of her foot.

For the fat boy, who must peddle meat instead of going to college, is fighting his way through the slough of despond to the heights of honest endeavor; and the pale little woman across the street is day to day outfacing onslaught by the demons of ill health and poverty.

The world is full of unaccredited courage, the courage of the humbler hero and heroine. Sometimes it crops into truth written as fiction and sold to the magazines and the book publishers; and when we read the pages we hail them as a transcript from life. However, we are prone not to hail them as representing the life next door

or across the way; they represent to us life that occurs, or might easily occur, elsewhere—for instance, in the next county. Nevertheless, the hero life and the heroine life is that everyday life in which we mingle.

No man is a hero to his valet; and the pity is that few men and women are heroic to their neighbors. Yet courage is the prevalent virtue of humankind.

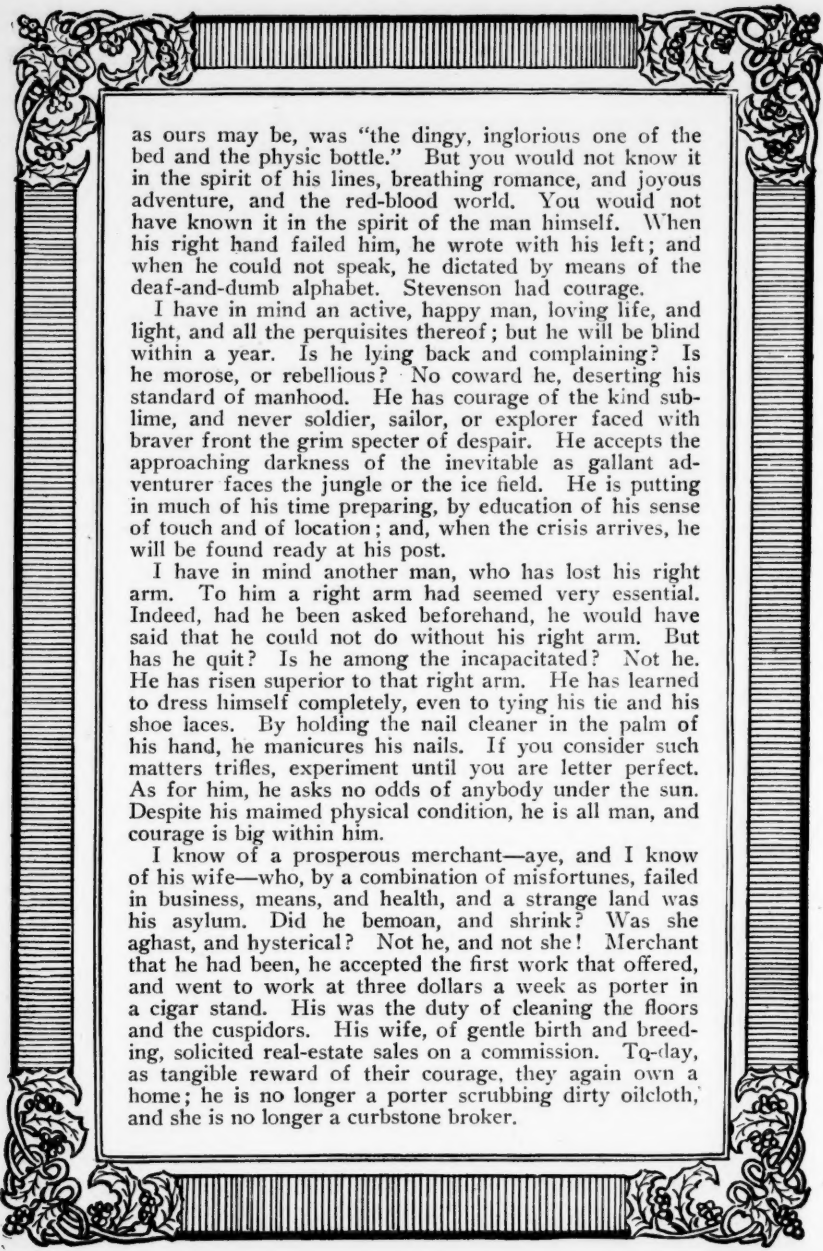
The tenements or slums of any one city see more heroism and courage in one week than the arctic or the antarctic or the jungles of the equator have seen in all their history. The crowded street car of a week-day morning or evening contains more courage of indomitable, uncomplaining strain than a company upon the battlefield. In the tenements, in the car, as in homes and upon street the country over, are persons young and old buoyed by only their individual, unsupported courage against poverty, sickness, misfortune, grief, and despair. Their scars are the lines upon their faces; their medals are the rewards of daily duty; their records are a part of the great book of common life.

Courage! What is courage? Is it something that we must read about, that we must worship two or three times a year, that we must regard as a quality that flashes fire whenever struck, like flint upon steel? Are you and I, because we follow what are termed humdrum programs, because we may not be soldiers, sailors, or explorers, to be deprived of proving that courage which we know we possess?

Horatius and Custer, Nelson and Farragut, Columbus and Stanley, and Peary and Cook—must it be that opportunity, neglecting us and our like, touched with its golden finger them and their like? No, I deem not; and the heart that wins the sword clash or the pole exhibits no finer courage than the heart that out of grief wins comfort and out of bankruptcy wins success.

So don't let us, brothers and sisters, lay away our courage in moth balls, upon the theory that it is not to be needed. Courage consists not only in leading troop, fleet, or squad upon a forlorn hope. Back of the forlorn hope are the plaudits of a world. But there is the courage of the man and the woman who must go it alone; and that is courage unsurpassed.

Remember Robert Louis Stevenson—remember him, not for his published work—as most people do remember him—but as a man who for fourteen years—thus he narrates—did not have “a day's health.” His battlefield,



as ours may be, was "the dingy, inglorious one of the bed and the physic bottle." But you would not know it in the spirit of his lines, breathing romance, and joyous adventure, and the red-blood world. You would not have known it in the spirit of the man himself. When his right hand failed him, he wrote with his left; and when he could not speak, he dictated by means of the deaf-and-dumb alphabet. Stevenson had courage.

I have in mind an active, happy man, loving life, and light, and all the perquisites thereof; but he will be blind within a year. Is he lying back and complaining? Is he morose, or rebellious? No coward he, deserting his standard of manhood. He has courage of the kind sublime, and never soldier, sailor, or explorer faced with braver front the grim specter of despair. He accepts the approaching darkness of the inevitable as gallant adventurer faces the jungle or the ice field. He is putting in much of his time preparing, by education of his sense of touch and of location; and, when the crisis arrives, he will be found ready at his post.

I have in mind another man, who has lost his right arm. To him a right arm had seemed very essential. Indeed, had he been asked beforehand, he would have said that he could not do without his right arm. But has he quit? Is he among the incapacitated? Not he. He has risen superior to that right arm. He has learned to dress himself completely, even to tying his tie and his shoe laces. By holding the nail cleaner in the palm of his hand, he manicures his nails. If you consider such matters trifles, experiment until you are letter perfect. As for him, he asks no odds of anybody under the sun. Despite his maimed physical condition, he is all man, and courage is big within him.

I know of a prosperous merchant—aye, and I know of his wife—who, by a combination of misfortunes, failed in business, means, and health, and a strange land was his asylum. Did he bemoan, and shrink? Was she aghast, and hysterical? Not he, and not she! Merchant that he had been, he accepted the first work that offered, and went to work at three dollars a week as porter in a cigar stand. His was the duty of cleaning the floors and the cuspidors. His wife, of gentle birth and breeding, solicited real-estate sales on a commission. To-day, as tangible reward of their courage, they again own a home; he is no longer a porter scrubbing dirty oilcloth, and she is no longer a curbstone broker.

I know of a man whose wife and only child were suddenly taken from him, and he was left apparently desolate in the ashes of his hearth. Did he repine, and tell his trouble, curse his God, inflict his loneliness upon his friends? Not he! None, to see him and to talk with him, would suspect the grief within his heart. For he has the courage to smile and to shed sweetness; and he is another hero.

The coward is not only the man or woman who shirks great crises. The coward is not necessarily the man or woman who retires at physical danger and shows the white flag before leveled rifle, or bared fang, or the fury of the elements. The yellow streak is developed just as pronouncedly by the dark day, by the business reverse, by the touch of headache or dyspepsia, in whining protests against "fate," in disposition to browbeat the weak and revile the strong.

To me, the business man who returns home cross and gloomy when the day has not gone right for him, is somewhat of a coward; and so is the wife or mother who puts more stress upon what money buys than upon what love earns. To smile amid the bafflings of adversity, be that adversity an attack on means, or health, or dearest ties, is as great an achievement, in its way, as to hew a path to some wilderness goal—and it is apt to be of more immediate benefit to mankind.

Here is the road of courage, the road of the widow and the fatherless, of the invalid and the bankrupt, of the weary and the wounded, of the wan, the grimy, the weak, and the stalwart; here is the road, the common road of everyday life, jostling with heroes and heroines known and unknown by us—a glorious company, our inspiration and our rivals. Galleons, and battles, and adventures abroad are for the few. If courage were engendered or proven by those elements only, the world would harbor mainly cowards without opportunity, and you and I would feel ourselves human things, ignoble, disappointed, balked of our birthright of true manhood and womanhood.

But, thank God, courage—good courage, worthy courage—is a quality adapted to all times and to all conditions; it is about us and in us; and those names emblazoned upon tablets and lecture boards and as magazine special contributors have not the monopoly.



The Queen's Hat

By Evelyn Gill Klahr

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

THERE are two kinds of hearts—the small-family heart and the large-family heart. If you have the one, you may get along perfectly well with not a soul but yourself to fuss over and cherish; but if you have the other sort you can't do it; your heart won't rest until, in some way or other, it has found the numbers it demands.

That was the trouble with Helena Whetherbrook and her fourteen-year-old niece, Dorothy; they had extra-size large-family hearts, and only each other to look out for. It was different back home in Evansville, where they had mothered half the town; but here in New York, where they must stay until Dorothy's treatment was finished, they were experiencing the loneliness that only the large-family heart can feel. In the whole city they hadn't an acquaintance except Dorothy's doctor, and in spite of the fact that they had chosen a boarding house instead of a hotel, in hopes of finding a homy atmosphere, they couldn't seem to make any friends.

Day after day they went in and out of the house, and down to their meals, without a soul save themselves to whom to speak; and all the time they were really starving for some one to scold, or to pet, or to advise.

That was why unconsciously they

fell into the habit of long-distance mothering. They worried every time the pretty girl went out without being dressed warmly enough; and they wanted to shake the fat man who had the expensive suite of rooms next to theirs for eating sausage and pastry and things that were bound to make him even fatter; and, oh, how they hoped the shabby Jones would buy some new clothes while they were here!

The Jones had the next table, and, without ever having exchanged a word with them, Helena and Dorothy had learned much concerning them: How it was business that had brought Mr. Jones here, and how it wasn't going very well; and how the little, tiny room on the fifth floor was really expensive when you thought how tiny it was; and how it would be good to get back home again, where there was more room, and where things didn't cost so much; and how Mrs. Jones hated the responsibility of shopping alone, because when you have once bought a thing the money is gone, and that's the end of it, and couldn't her husband spare a little time to go shopping with her?

Helena and Dorothy fretted for fear she would put off the shopping altogether, and that would never do at all. For in spite of the sweet rose color of her cheeks, and the light, soft, curling

hair that Helena and Dorothy loved, in spite of all of Mrs. Jones' prettiness, you couldn't forget what a shabby little thing she was, and that her hat, with its moth-eaten wing, was dreadful beyond words.

But all this wasn't nearly enough to satisfy the large-family hearts of Helena and Dorothy, and so, as they read their morning papers, they even began to feel a personal responsibility about the government of the United States, and the Balkan war, and the crowned heads of Europe.

It was Sunday morning, and Dorothy spread the supplement of the Sunday paper out on the breakfast table.

"Goodness, gracious sakes!" she exclaimed, a bit impatiently. "Look at her now!"

Helena moved her niece's cup of cocoa out of the way of the supplement, and leaned over to see. "Who?" she asked.

"Queen of England," Dorothy told her. "And she's wearing another."

Helena studied the picture critically. "It's just as bad as the last one," she sighed.

"It's worse!" Dorothy scolded. "I simply can't stand those dinky little hats she wears, and that's all there is to it."

"If she weren't so dear and lovely," Helena again sighed, "I wouldn't mind so much; but she's too nice to be spoiled by those hats."

"It's dreadful!" said Dorothy. "And I should think the English nation would feel badly about it."

Helena began smiling to herself, a whimsical little smile that brought dimples into her cheeks. "It's barely pos-

sible, you know," she said, "that it's our taste that is at fault, and not the queen's. It is possible that a queen might have as good taste in hats as you and I."

"Oh, I don't think so!" Dorothy was prompt to object. "Just think of all



They worried every time the pretty girl went out without being dressed warmly enough.

the hats we've selected for people at home, and how good it's been for them. Why, every one in Evansville was glad when we got Jennie Biggins to give up those awful fruit hats she trimmed herself; and I honestly don't believe Annie Tobey would ever have got married if we hadn't made her give up old-maid hats and wear young-girl hats."



"Goodness, gracious sakes!" she exclaimed, a bit impatiently. "Look at her now!"

"I know," Helena nodded.

"Look here!" Dorothy cried, a flush of excitement coming into her cheeks. "Now, don't laugh! Why couldn't we pick out a hat here in New York and send it over to her? Why couldn't we?"

"Oh, Dorothy, child, don't be foolish!"

"But it isn't foolish. Why shouldn't we do it? I'm sure we've got awfully good taste—doesn't every one in Evansville think so? Why shouldn't we send it?"

"In the first place, it would never reach her. They wouldn't bother her with it——"

Dorothy interrupted: "Oh, but she would! I read just the other day in

a magazine or something that she and the king always see all their own mail."

"And, besides, she'd just think it was awfully impertinent."

"It is impertinent," Dorothy admitted; "but it would be a heavenly hat just the same. Maybe she's never tried on a lovely big one before; maybe they always make her those horrid little ones because she thinks she likes them best, without knowing how dear she'd look in another. And she'd probably say: 'Oh, those dreadful Americans!' But just the same"—Dorothy's cheeks were glowing now, and her eyes were bright—"just the same, Aunt Helena, when she was alone in her room with that hat she couldn't help trying it on. No woman could, I don't

care whether she is the Queen of England or an unconverted Zulu, she couldn't help it! She'd walk over to it, and say again, 'Oh, those dreadful Americans!' And then she'd peep into the box again just to make sure how dreadful it was, and then she'd try it on, and then when she saw how perfectly sweet she looked in it she'd just plain have to keep it and wear it."

"But, Dorothy, it seems such a lot of money——"

"But haven't we got lots more than we need?"

"I know, but there are other things we ought to do with it."

"Aunt Helena, darling," begged Dorothy, "don't say missionaries this time! Oh, please don't!"

"After all," said Aunt Helena musingly, "I don't suppose even the missionaries could make a whole nation pious with sixty dollars."

"But we could make a whole nation glad with sixty dollars," Dorothy added eagerly, "if we bought a sweet hat for their queen. Just think how all Evansville was glad about Jennie Biggins' hats!"

Helena sipped her coffee, and looked thoughtfully into her cup.

Dorothy watched anxiously until she saw the whimsical smile begin to appear, and then she knew that she had won.

"Could we get it to-morrow?" she asked eagerly.

"I suppose," said Helena, "that we might as well do it. It would amuse us, and it couldn't do any harm, and it might——"

"It might make a whole nation glad," said Dorothy solemnly, "just as we made all Evansville glad. And we'll get it first thing in the morning, won't we?"

So the first thing in the morning they started. In window after window on the avenue the hats were laying their traps for the feminine fancy, and luring the feminine eye, and always and always promising miracles. Here a hat promised to give you back your youth, although it was years ago that you stopped counting your birthdays; and here another promised to turn even a pudgy little person like you into something graceful and dignified; and here another guaranteed to make even the little clerk of a five-and-ten-cent store into a real princess person.

And where the hats in the window were loveliest of all, there Dorothy and Helena entered.

"It's not a hat for either of us," Helena explained to the saleslady who met them. "We're selecting one for a very dear friend of ours."

"What sort of hat does she like?" demanded the saleslady.

Helena skillfully evaded the question. "We know exactly what will suit her best," she said, "and I think we'd

better just look around by ourselves until we find something."

Back there in Evansville it had never been so hard to select a hat for Jennie Biggins, or for Annie Tobey, as it was here on Fifth Avenue to select one for the Queen of England. There was that plum-colored one with the bird of paradise that Dorothy felt sure they must take; and the one with the new shade of blue and the ermine that Helena was equally sure would be best; and the big one with the queer, soft, feathery things on it that they both liked fairly well.

And then, when they were almost despairing of ever being able to decide, suddenly and at the same instant their eyes fell on the queen's very hat. It was a big black velvet hat, wonderful, rich, silky, black velvet, and you could have searched the avenue from Washington Square to the Harlem River, and never have found another such feather as the feather on that hat. It was a winsome, charming, bewitching, miracle-promising hat; it was at once regal and exquisitely feminine; it was the queen's own hat.

And while they were gazing at it in silence, still thrilled over their discovery, a saleslady appeared with an abrupt "Beg pardon!" deliberately picked it up, and bore it away.

Half indignantly, Helena and Dorothy turned to watch her, and then Dorothy gave a sudden little cry of surprise! "Why, look, Aunt Helena! See whom she's showing it to! It's the Jones!"

"Why, bless me, so it is! It's our next-table Jones!"

And at that very moment the queen's hat was being placed on the head of shabby little Mrs. Jones.

Instantly the hat performed the miracle it had promised—it turned the shabby young wife, who was staying in the cheapest room on the top floor, into a charming, gracious, adorable young queen.

But it didn't stop there with its miracles; you could see another one by looking at the young husband's face, for he had fallen in love all over again,

and because of that was completely forgetting that business wasn't going very well, and that bills were coming in, and that he had nearly quarreled with her this very morning, and had called her inconsiderate and selfish because she had insisted that he go shopping with her no matter how busy he was. Now he only remembered that he was in love again.

Over in their corner, behind a counter of hats, Helena and Dorothy saw the miracles.

"Isn't she the very sweetest and darlinest and loveliest that ever was!" whispered Dorothy, in rapture.

"She's adorable!" Helena whispered back. "And isn't he glad about that hat!"

Then they heard him say: "Nan, I don't think you need look at any more of them."

Mrs. Jones regarded herself critically in the big mirror. How could she help but know how utterly charming she looked in that hat? And yet, in an amazing fashion, she managed to preserve a dubious expression.

"You really think it isn't bad?" she asked her husband.

He couldn't keep his pride out of his face and voice as he answered.

"I think we'll take it," he said promptly.

Back in their corner, Dorothy and Helena smiled at each other.

"He can't take his eyes off of her," Dorothy whispered.

"He thinks he isn't showing how proud he is," Helena whispered back.

"He'd like to parade her all over New York, so that every one in the city could see how sweet she is."

"Ssh!" Helena silenced her.

For Mrs. Jones had turned away from the mirror, and was speaking to the saleslady. "How much is it?" she was asking.

"Fifty-five dollars," the saleslady replied blithely, as if fifty-five dollars was nothing at all, a trifle one parted with without a second thought, a mere nominal sum for a hat like this.

For a moment no one spoke. Helena and Dorothy waited breathlessly.

Then little Mrs. Jones turned again to the saleslady. "Before I decide, you might show me a few others. You might"—as if it were an afterthought—"show me something quite a little cheaper."

She did it gracefully, as if she were not at all afraid of fifty-five dollars, but this time really preferred another kind.

But when the saleslady had gone in quest of more she turned to her husband with a shocked gasp:

"Why, Jim, isn't that awful? Why, I paid only four and a half at home for my last winter's hat!"

But there was a determined light in Jim's eyes, and his chin was set firmly.

"We're going to get it anyhow," he replied quietly. He had just fallen in love all over again, you remember.

She looked at him with frightened eyes. "Jim, we can't!" she protested. "We simply can't afford it."

"Yes, we can," he repeated doggedly. "You don't come to New York every day."

"But—why, Jim, we couldn't get your new overcoat then."

"I don't need a new overcoat."

Hidden behind the counter of hats, Dorothy and Helena again exchanged looks.

"Oh, he does!" whispered Dorothy.

"Of course he does," Helena answered. "See how shabby and worn and old-fashioned it is. And see how much she wants him to have a new one."

For Mrs. Jones was regarding her husband with troubled eyes.

"But, dear," she was saying, "you must get your coat, because we've been counting on it for so long."

"I know," he answered, "but I don't like the coats this season. Wouldn't wear one. They're all such queer homespun sort of things, and I'm going to wait until another season——"

But the saleslady had come back with more hats.

Mrs. Jones tried them on, and now there was a determined light in *her* eyes, too. She asked the price of each hat before it went on her head.



"She's adorable!" Helena whispered back. "And isn't he glad about that hat!"

Dorothy whispered again to Helena: "You see if he doesn't get that coat, after all."

"Of course he will," replied Helena, her eyes on Mrs. Jones.

"I like this one," announced Mrs. Jones, holding the very cheapest one of all rather caressingly in her hands. It was a plain little eight-dollar hat that only made her look very nice, and not at all like a queen.

Her husband shook his head with determination. "The other one is the one we want, Nan."

The saleslady agreed with him sympathetically. "A very much better model," she said, "and so much more becoming to madam." Then she held it seductively before Mrs. Jones' eyes.

But that determined light was still in the young wife's eyes. She put aside the nice, plain, cheap, little hat, and again put on the beautiful miracle worker.

She looked critically at herself in the mirror. "The front of it is charming," she said.

Then she picked up a hand glass,

and turned around so that she might see the back of the hat. She scrutinized it carefully, and a little pucker came between her eyebrows. "It's lovely in front," she repeated.

"What's the matter with the back?" her husband asked anxiously.

She shook her head doubtfully.

"It's very good in the back, madam," the saleslady assured her.

Young Mrs. Jones turned to the saleslady with a conciliatory smile. "I wonder if I might see one or two more," she begged.

And when that person's back was turned Mrs. Jones explained to her husband: "There's no use saying anything to *her*, but the back of that hat is dreadful—perfectly dreadful!"

The man looked troubled; after all, he knew he was only a man.

"But I think it looks all right in the back," he ventured.

She gave him a kindly, but superior, smile. "Men never know anything about hats."

"There are men milliners," he defended himself.

She wilted him with her next remark. "I hope you don't think you are one?" she said.

"That hat looks all right to me," he repeated weakly.

"Yes," she told him gently, "but it won't to Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Raine, and, remember, they sit right behind me in church."

"Well, just what is wrong with it?" he persisted.

"It's the lines," she told him impressively; "the lines are all wrong."

He couldn't argue about "lines," because he wasn't quite sure what it meant. He was silenced at last.

"Now, this one," she went on quickly, picking up the very cheap little hat, "this one has lovely lines."

Just then the salesperson came back. "We'll take this one," Mrs. Jones told her, holding up the cheap little hat, and was paying for it and giving the address and directions for having it sent—putting it all through like a general—before any one had time to protest.

But as they went out of the store her husband looked back longingly at the lovely black velvet.

"Have you found anything that suits you?" It was the saleslady who had come back to Helena and Dorothy.

"Yes," said Helena; "that big black one over there that the other lady was looking at."

As the saleslady went off to get it Dorothy sighed. "She looked so sweet in it," she said, "and the back was every bit as sweet as the front."

"Just as sweet," her aunt agreed; "but you must remember the overcoat."

"And, anyhow," added Dorothy, "the queen can have her hat now."

The saleslady brought the hat to

them, and then went off to get another and more expensive one.

Helena and Dorothy stood looking in silence at the queen's hat. Their first ardent enthusiasm had completely disappeared.

Suddenly Helena looked up. "The queen, or Mrs. Jones?" she demanded. "She never saw us here, and she wouldn't dream where it came from."

"And yet," said Dorothy, a little dubiously, "we intended it for the queen; and, besides, there's the English nation to be considered. We must remember that."

Helena's eyes were staring dreamily beyond the hats. "Perhaps," she mused, "perhaps the queen wears those dinky little hats because her husband likes them best."

Dorothy wasn't quite convinced. "Could we flip a coin?" she suggested.

"Of course we could!" Helena agreed, and produced a quarter. "Heads for the Queen of England, tails for Mrs. Jones. Three out of five times."

The coin was flipped. It turned up heads. "The Queen of England!" said Helena, in surprise.

Again the coin was flipped, and again it turned up heads.

"The Queen of England!" sighed Dorothy, a bit regretfully, as she picked up the coin to toss it for the third time. And for the third time the coin turned up heads.

Their eyes sought each other—the Queen of England suddenly seemed very far away and unimportant, while Mrs. Jones sat at the very next table to them, and had a husband who adored her in that hat.

Dorothy looked back at the coin. "Mrs. Jones!" she announced.

"Mrs. Jones!" echoed Helena.



The BEAN POT

By VIRGINIA MIDDLETON

Author of "True Love,"
"Simplicity," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
R. EMMETT OWEN



HILTON was pleasurably excited on a certain May morning sixteen years ago. An auction was always a pleasurable excitement to the countryside, affording as it did both unaccustomed opportunity for social intercourse and the even more valuable chance to explore recesses in the auctioning person's house to which access was usually denied.

Up the long, straggling street that was the main thoroughfare of the village all sorts of vehicles began to arrive as early as ten o'clock. The auction was advertised to open at eleven, but there was a precious hour during which the good housewives of the vicinity could pry among Miss Drusilla Hinsdale's treasures, could fix a valuation on her best-room carpet, her braided-rag rugs, her kitchen oilcloth; could recall the time when she had bought her new china set, and could estimate the damage that the years had done to it.

Miss Drusilla had always been a notable housekeeper; no matter what the hour at which a neighbor might appear, the house was shining, every pane of glass was twinkling, the kitchen stove was burnished, the tins and the yellow

crocks were ranged with mathematical precision on the kitchen shelves. Remembering the perfection of her tidiness, the rigor of her reserve, her old friends felt that it would savor almost of forbidden joys to wander through the rooms in their auction disarray, unhindered by her dignified presence.

The morning was all that the pleasure seekers could desire. The sky was softly blue, the sunshine mildly warm. The apple blossoms were sweetening the air from the little orchard behind the house. The long young grasses of the lawn were starred with slender-stemmed, long, blue violets. The neighbors told one another how Miss Drusilla would turn in her grave to know her lawn untrimmed for a whole month even in the early spring. But what nice feeling as to the sacred season of lawn mowing, they asked, with sad shakings of the head, could you expect of a poorhouse child? And from that weighty question they went on to talk in whispers of Miss Drusilla's amazing will, whereby this same poorhouse child was made her heir.

"I reckon the Hinsdales are all right mad about it," said Mrs. Porter comfortably to Mrs. Perkins. "I've heard

tell that Si Hinsdale's folks, from over Barkhempstead way, ain't goin' to come at all to the auction. They say they don't see any reason why they should. And the Bemises—they were cousins, you know—they let on they think of breakin' the will. Mis' Bemis says that if it wasn't such a serious thing it would make her laugh to think of Drusilly Hinsdale's beginning that will with them words about 'bein' of sound and disposin' mind.' She says there wouldn't be the least difficulty in the world about provin' what the lawyers call 'undue influence.'"

"Well, I dunno," said Mrs. Perkins to Mrs. Porter. "There wasn't no one in any of the Hiltons—East, West, Center, or Corners—that drove a better bargain with her hay last winter than Drusilly. An' she got a good price, too, for that bunch of young heifers she wintered. I think the Bemises will have their work cut out for them if they try to prove Drusilly Hinsdale didn't know what she was about when she made that will. Besides, it is five years old, ain't it? An' no one let on to think Drusilly touched in her mind five years ago."

"Yes, it's five years old. Oh, I think Drusilly knew what she was doing. The very wordin' of the will shows it, too. Didn't she particularly say that all her blood relatives was well-to-do people, well fixed in this world's goods, and that she owed them nothing, whereas"—the lady rolled the legal "whereas" lovingly beneath her tongue—"whereas Lora Greenleaf, the orphan child she had brought into her home, had nothing, and had always shown her the duty and affection due a guardian; and that that was the reason she was leavin' everything to Lora?"

"Lora's gettin' to be a real personable girl," observed Mrs. Gilbert, who had joined the group, with apparent irrelevance. But Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Perkins exchanged a quick glance of understanding. To their minds, there was no irrelevancy in the sudden discovery of charm in Lora Greenleaf by Mrs. Gilbert, mother of three marriageable boys. Drusilla Hinsdale's legacy

was likely to open the eyes of many of Hilton's mothers to beauties hitherto unnoticed in her.

Yet unprejudiced eyes might have seen attraction in her even without the new aura cast by her inheritance. She stood, somewhat shyly and awkwardly, at the hall door of the white house beneath the maples. She was twenty, slim, and wistful looking. She had never known quite how to comport herself among the kindly matrons of Hilton, for they had never let her forget that her benefactress had taken her out of the poorhouse. She knew no more now than before, but some vague instinct of hospitality, some desire to do everything as Miss Drusilla would wish to have it done, made her stand among the clutter of chairs and tables, of bales and boxes, that spilled from the hall out onto the lawn, and to offer her half-frightened welcome to those who came to appraise and buy, and to those who merely came to pry or to picnic.

She knew, of course, that they were all talking about her, and were wondering what means she had used to make Miss Drusilla disinherit her own kin; there was intelligence, as well as kindness, in her warm eyes, and she had the broad, well-shaped forehead of a thinker. But her deductions did not add to her ease in welcoming the auction crowd.

Some of the Hinsdale connection, less obdurate than the Hinsdales of Barkhempstead, had arrived to avail themselves of a specific provision which Miss Drusilla's will had made for them:

And I hereby direct that my house, in Hilton Center, with all its contents, with all outbuildings, stock, and fixtures be sold at public auction before the end of May following my decease; and that all moneys accruing from such sale shall be held in trust by the Hartford Mutual Trust and Guarantee Company, for Lora Greenleaf, until she is twenty-five years old, or until her marriage; and the interest on the same paid to her in quarterly installments. I direct this sale to be held in order that any members of the Hinsdale, Bemis, or Cannon families, who would like to own any of the family property, may have a just chance to buy it. They are all amply able to do so, and it is my desire that they should not have

an opportunity later to grieve over the passing of any Hinsdale heirlooms into strangers' hands.

There was no question that Miss Drusilla had known what she meant, and the Hinsdale connections who had arrived, after they had greeted Lora curtly, proceeded at once through the house, telling one another what "lots" they proposed to bid in, provided always that meddlesome outsiders did not run the price up on them.

The silver spoons that had been Great-grandmother Hinsdale's; the sword and sash worn by the Captain Hinsdale who fell at Antietam; the portrait of that greatest of all the Hinsdales, the Revolutionary governor; Grandfather Hinsdale's grandfather's clock; the old Bemis desk in the corner; the Bohemian glass decanters and wine service—though all the Hinsdales within the memory of living man had been prohibitionists of the deepest dye—it would be most unfitting that any of these treasures should pass into alien hands, and especially that they should, by any hook or crook, fall into the hands of that designing, deceitful, mealy-mouthed Lora Greenleaf.

"There's only one thing to be remembered," said Mrs. Alonzo Hinsdale to Mrs. Walter Bemis. "If it hadn't been Lora—though goodness knows I'm not standing up for her—it would have been Ben Cannon. Drusilla was wrapped up in him when he was a

youngster, the way these old maids always *do* get wrapped up in some child, or some cat, or something. If he had been content to stay by her after his father and mother died there's no question but what she'd have left him everything."

"I dunno but you're right," agreed Mrs. Walter. "Well, for my part, I'm not so set against Lora as a lot of them seem to be. She needs it more than we do." Mrs. Walter's voice was comfortably arrogant. "And she needs it more than Ben Cannon. He's a man, for one thing, and for another he has whatever his father left."

"Had, you mean," Mrs. Alonzo corrected her sister-in-law. "By this time he's spent it on that education he was so bent on giving himself. That's why



They proceeded at once through the house, telling one another what "lots" they proposed to bid in.

he left Drusilly, you remember. He'd have done better to invest it, when he got hold of it, in a nice little piece of land. They tell me he's lawing down in New Haven. Maybe he knows his own business best, but what I always says is—land can't get away from you."

The church sheds across the street were full of the buggies and carryalls of the assembly. To every hitching post, as far as the post office and general store at the top of the hill, was fastened a team. Under the new-leaved trees stood a line of wagons. There were real-estate men from the neighboring towns among the throng that trod Miss Drusilla's grass and looked at her wall papers, curiously blotched and stained where pictures and mirrors had been removed from them. Hilton was beginning to be known to the city man with country aspirations. Not only were agents present, but also at least one possible city purchaser, who had taken the precaution to bring a builder up with him to estimate the probable cost of remodeling the plain white house.

The auctioneer—big, burly, good-natured—shouldered his way through the crowd to the deal table at the front door. He stood upon the rough stone step as upon a platform, and pounded the table with an impromptu gavel—a wooden potato masher.

The children who had accompanied their parents on the day's picnicking, and who had begun to weary of inaction and to whimper and demand cookies, were awed into silence by his great, round voice, his great, round, red face. The auction began with lot No. 1—a set of silver-plated teaspoons, "as good, ladies and gentlemen, as the day they came out of the store; everybody who knows what sort of housekeeper Miss Drusilla Hinsdale was knows that."

The sale went on. Heartburnings and jealousies arose among the Hinsdales present as the duly expressed preferences of one niece or cousin-in-law were disregarded by another; when Mrs. Walter saw the grandfather's clock which she had preempted calmly

taken by Mrs. Alonzo's mean process of overbidding, and when Mrs. Alonzo beheld the ancient silver spoons upon which she had proclaimed her heart set captured by Mrs. Walter. The neighbors were, on the whole, rather generous to the relatives in the matter of the heirlooms. Only two or three city women, who had motored down from their places among the surrounding hills, ran the prices up on the antiques.

There was one bidder for the portrait of the Revolutionary governor who annoyed the heirs of that gentleman present very considerably. He was a rather dingy little man, pepper and salt as to hair, mustache, and clothing. He was unknown in the neighborhood. He had arrived by stage from Seymour Falls that morning. And he was bidding against the heirs of Great-great-grandfather Hinsdale for the possession of that gentleman's portrait until the heirs began to imagine that the picture must be a remarkable work of art, as well as a likeness to which filial pride and piety gave value.

Finally Walter Bemis, at the instigation of his wife, approached the auctioneer with the request that he discover whether the stranger represented the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, or what.

"There's no use biddin' against him if he's got J. Pierpont Morgan or some one like that behind him," declared Mr. Bemis.

The auctioneer, who on his nonauctioning days was a cattle trader, was quite willing to oblige a frequent customer. He asked if the stranger would mind mentioning whom he represented, or if he was bidding on his own account. The stranger, apparently nothing loath, said placidly that he represented Mr. Benjamin Cannon, of New Haven. After which there was a spirited spurt of competition between the various branches of the Hinsdale family present in person or by proxy; and finally the portrait was knocked down to Mr. Cannon's agent at a figure that would greatly have astonished and delighted its painter.

Lora looked on at it all with a nervously beating heart. She longed to bid in something from the old house that had sheltered her for so long. She could not bear to see everything go that had made up her idea of a home. It was almost like losing Miss Drusilla over again to see one thing after another carried off by its purchaser, or by its purchaser's more muscular husband, to a waiting wagon or automobile. Yet she dared not open her lips to hold back one of the familiar objects. She felt herself surrounded by hostility and criticism; she did not wish to draw more of it down upon herself by any appearance of greed.

So, one by one, the things disappeared—the big rocking-chair in which Miss Drusilla used to sit and knit, the colored lithographs "Good Night" and "Good Morning" which had hung upon the walls of her own little bedroom, and had seemed to her childish eyes, after the whitewashed bareness of the poorhouse, the most beautiful things in the world. She remembered, with a sob in her throat, that she had used to climb upon a chair each night in order to kiss the two pink, dimpled babies of the pictures good night. And now the blacksmith's wife had bought them for fifteen cents, because she herself had not dared open her lips to save them.

So it went on until the odds and ends of household goods were reached—the stone crocks, the tin measures, the biscuit cutters, the preserve jars without tops, the apple corers, the milk pans. Bidding upon these was not spirited. Hilton kitchens were well supplied with all such necessities. The things went slowly, for little prices. The Hinsdale connections, watching Lora Greenleaf fidget and blush and pale, accused her in their minds of annoyance because that trust fund of hers was not growing as she wished. It never occurred to one of them that she was merely trying to screw her courage up to bid in some memento of her home—some souvenir of her benefactress.

Opportunity after opportunity went by. For nickels and dimes the kitchen fittings were disbursed. Finally the

auctioneer's son and assistant, an agile boy of twelve, who was greatly enjoying himself, placed upon the deal table two bean pots. One was a large one—a very giant of a bean pot; it belonged to a boarding house, or to a great family, where long rows of children's faces beamed between father at one end of the table and mother at the other. Why Miss Drusilla possessed it was a mystery. In what hope or expectation she had bought it no one knew. But there it sat, its brown luster unimpaired, its shining surface uncracked by any oven's heat. And beside it stood the bean pot of her regular Saturday night use—a modest, quart-sized utensil, its glaze dimmed by many years of service, scarred by honorable conflicts with the stove door.

The auctioneer descanted upon the bean pots in his usual florid and poetical style. Their lids were attached to their handles by pieces of twine. He lifted the lid of the small one as he spoke. He replaced it. He lifted the lid of the larger one, and cried out, like a prospector discovering a vein of gold: "And, ladies and gentlemen, this bean pot, this new, untouched, unused bean pot, as good as on the day when it left the store, is full of beans." He lifted his hand, and let rain through his fingers a little shower of hard white pellets. "A dollar's worth of beans—anyway, a half dollar's! Your Saturday night supper for two—three—yes, even four weeks. What am I offered for this bean pot? What am I offered? What am I offered—for these two bean pots?"

"Five cents!" piped a voice from the rear of the assemblage. Lora cast a look of indignation toward the miller's wife, notoriously the most parsimonious woman in Hilton—and Hilton was not renowned for prodigality on the part of any of its citizens.

"Fifty cents!" She heard her own voice ring out loud, clear, and defiant. She thought of all the Saturday nights when that little brown pot, emitting a savory steam, had been drawn from the oven; she thought of all the Friday nights when, from the mammoth



"Goin' to be gone overnight, or comin' back on the stage this afternoon?" inquired the postmaster's wife.

pot, Miss Drusilla had scooped out the supply of beans to be soaked overnight. She could not bear to see the bean pots go to the miller's wife.

The miller's wife, for her part, had no intention of entering into any reckless competition. She shrugged her shoulders, murmured "Easy come, easy go!" to her next neighbor, and resigned herself to do without the pots and their contents. And in another second Lora found herself, blushing very deeply, walking up to the auctioneer's table to pay the fifty cents.

When all the household effects had been sold, the auction took a recess of an hour, and picnic lunches were produced from the wagons; and the auc-

tioneer's wife, who had obtained from the executors of Miss Drusilla's estate "the coffee and sandwich privilege" for the day, was busily engaged in selling food and drink to the improvident who had failed to bring their own with them. And then came the afternoon sale, and the city man, who had thoughtfully convoyed the builder along with him, bought the house and the farm for thirty-three hundred dollars.

The city man seemed an amiable sort of person, though thriftless; none of the countryside had been willing to bid more than twenty-two hundred dollars for Miss Drusilla's homestead, and the price had been run up only by the folly of the purchaser and of the real-estate

agents, who were his only real rivals. He approached Lora genially at the close of the day.

"They tell me you're living here, Miss Greenleaf," he said affably. "I don't want you to think there's a particle of hurry about your leaving, as far as I am concerned. We won't be ready to take possession for a month. I've bought back some of the beds and the kitchen range and most of the rest of the kitchen furniture from the people who bid it in. So I guess you can manage to be comfortable here, in a picnicking sort of way, until you make other arrangements."

Lora's brown eyes, faithful and devoted, like a dog's, filled with grateful tears. No one but this stranger had spoken to her of her plans. Not one of the Hinsdale connection, who had known her since she was a little, thin, frightened child of eight, had asked her to spend a week, a day even, with them. After the excitement of the sale was over, she was sure that some of the neighbors would remember her and her loneliness and the forlorn house, and would come running over in the twilight to offer her supper and a bed. But this stranger was the only person who had spoken to her yet, and she was touched by the kindness of his words.

"Oh, thank you!" she cried. "I'll know what I'm going to do in a week, and I'll leave then. But I should be very much obliged if I might stay on until then."

"Of course, of course, as long as you please. Well, I suppose I ought to be glad for your sake that they ran the price up on me so. The farmers hereabouts seemed to think I could get it for a little over two thousand. But it's an ill wind that blows nobody good; I'm glad you got a fair price. And I don't think I was badly stung."

"I hope you and your family will be very happy here," said Lora, with swimming eyes and trembling voice. She seemed impelled to speech. "And sometimes remember that the woman who lived here before you took in an orphan child and gave her a home and

raised her, and left her independent. There's something more goes with the place than just the land and buildings, it seems to me. I shall always be thinking of it, and wishing all happy who live in it."

"That means that a blessing goes with it," said the city man kindly, and climbed into his buggy and disappeared down the hillside in a cloud of dust that the setting sun made glorious.

Lora, alone in the house by and by, sat by the kitchen window and watched the afterglow fade from the west. She had lighted the fire in the stove, and had declined the expected invitation of the next-door neighbor; somehow, during the few days that she might still inhabit Miss Drusilla's house, she wanted to do so. Soon enough she would leave it forever. And she fell to dreaming about the day when she had first come to it, a terrified, speechless little girl of eight, fresh from the poor farm.

It was vague in Lora's mind what had brought her to the poor farm. She had a hazy recollection of a remote cabin, standing in a bowlder-strewn field; dimly she recalled the figure of a man plowing, planting, reaping in it and in the fields adjoining. Faintly she remembered a thin woman, forever busy, forever coughing, forever behind with her work inside the cabin. But when they left it she could not remember. Of course, they had been her father and mother; that she knew; of course it was death that had robbed her of them. But she could not remember when or how. She only remembered the poorhouse, the township paupers, the grim matron.

She must have lived there three or four years before the day when Miss Drusilla came, and, leading her out to a dusty buggy, lifted her in and drove her home. "To be my little girl," Miss Drusilla had said, not sentimentally, but rather severely, rather like a school-teacher than a mother. Lora, however, who had been trained in the habits of obedience and of unquestioning submission to her elders, had not thought to criticize the tone then; nor had she

ever since. Gradually an unchildlike wisdom had been born in her, and she had not been ten years before she had learned how much goodness and kindness Miss Drusilla's desiccated manner concealed.

She had not had a particularly happy childhood and youth, except in so far as her relation with Miss Drusilla was concerned. It was not the fashion in Hilton to exclude children from adult conversations, and every child in the town consequently knew, on the day when Lora first appeared at school, that she was "the girl from the poor farm." In that simple, thrifty, self-respecting community there was scarcely any degradation to equal this. Beyond the hills, in the great world which was mainly evil, there might be riot, dissipation, bloodshed, murder—arson—pit beneath pit of horror and crime; but in Hilton about the lowest depth to which one could sink was to be obliged to "go on the town."

Lora had never recovered from the stigma. But she had had a good home; she had had an unexpressed sympathy with her patron; she had had warmth and food, coats and shoes, and such schooling as Hilton considered enough for its young. She had had the orchard and the woods, the hills and the brooks, and she had not been unhappy. She had had the best of housewifely training, and the crudest, plainest of religious training.

She sat waiting for her kettle to boil, watching the soft, gray evening fall, counting the scattered lights that gleamed one by one in the Hilton houses. She was very grateful to Miss Drusilla. She could go away from Hilton now, and could learn things; she might study stenography—she somehow felt the path to fortune might lie along that line. She might go to the high school, and then to the State normal school, and become in time a teacher. Oh, a thousand avenues were surely open to her now, thanks to the legacy that Miss Drusilla had left her. She had never hoped for it—indeed, she had never thought about Miss Drusilla's dying. But now it was hers, and

she would not allow the carping jealousy of all the Hinsdales, born or married, to rob her of her pleasure in it.

For, after all, she was not undeserving of it. If she had had a home for these twelve years, certainly she had rendered service in return for that home. It was a community in which "hired help" was unknown—at any rate, so far as the women were concerned. But Lora knew that no servant would have given such unremitting labor as she had given for any amount of wages. She had given it willingly enough; it had never occurred to her to think about it in terms of money value until to-day, when she had overheard the various Hinsdale branches computing what Miss Drusilla had spent upon her during the twelve years. Then, being but human, she had done a little computing on her own account. Certainly, if inheritances fell to merit, she deserved her legacy more than any of Miss Drusilla's relatives.

She rose to light the lamp in the bracket on the wall. It illumined all the room, thanks to the reflector behind it—an innovation in Miss Drusilla's household, due to her initiative. On the table stood her purchases at the auction—the two bean pots. She smiled in faint self-derision. What should she do with those two unwieldy vessels when she packed her trunk and started on her adventures? Still, she could not have helped buying them. She idly lifted the lid from the larger one, and idly sent her fingers down among the white beans.

Suddenly they came in contact with another substance. A folded paper, hard, unyielding, met her touch. She tried to pull it out, but could not without danger of tearing, because of the weight of the beans above. A sort of panic possessed her. She was in great haste to know what the paper contained. She dumped the beans upon the oilcloth-covered table. They spread, spilled, fell noisily to the floor. But she had the paper in her hands. Trembling, she opened it.

"I, Drusilla Hinsdale, being of sound and disposing mind," it began. The

words swam before Lora's eyes. It was a will, dated only two years before. And it stated that Drusilla Hinsdale bequeathed the real and personal property of which she might happen to die possessed to Benjamin Cannon, of New Haven, only son of the testator's cousin, the late Benjamin Cannon, of the town of Hilton. The document had been drawn and witnessed in New Haven, and Lora remembered that Miss Drusilla had made a fortnight's visit to that city two years before to see an old schoolmate. It was the one lengthy absence she had ever known Miss Drusilla to make from home. And Miss Drusilla had been at once singularly reticent and singularly friendly upon her return. "It was then she brought me my silk," said Lora to herself, remembering. "And so that was why. That was why." She sat staring at the kitchen wall for a long time. Then she arose, and very carefully she replaced the later will at the bottom of the bean pot, and gently, methodically covered it again with the beans.

She had barely finished her task when there was a rap at the kitchen door, and she opened it composedly to Mrs. Gilbert.

"Herbert, he just made me run down to fetch you up to our house," said Mrs. Gilbert, breathless with haste and hospitality. "He says to me: 'Lora, she'll be sittin' there in that hurrah's nest of a house, mopin' an' mournin'. Do go down, ma,' he says, 'an' fetch her up here, where there'll be some company for her.' An' so I came along. I says to him why didn't he come fetch you himself. But Herbert is shy outside the family. He wouldn't

come. But he sets great store by you, Lora—always has since you was a little mite at school."

There crept a curious little light into Lora's thoughtful eyes. She seemed to speculate upon something pleasing, something almost amusing. Mrs. Gilbert felt relieved that there had not been an immediate refusal of her invitation. "Come on, Lora, do," she urged hospitably and somewhat more assuredly.

"Thank you, Mrs. Gilbert; I don't believe I'll come to-night," said Lora, the light dying out of her eyes. "I'll come some other night if you want me."

"Well," said Herbert's mother, rising, "I dunno what Herbert'll say to



R. Emmett Owen

She had the paper in her hands.

me when I come home without you. Had your supper?"

"Not yet," admitted Lora.

"For the land's sake! You'll be down sick, child, if you don't take better care of yourself than that. I'm goin' to send Herb over with some cold meat an' biscuits, an' a glass of my quince marmalade. Most of my preserves are cleaned out by spring—my boys are great hands for sweets—but I've kept some quince."

"I don't believe I'll have any to-night, Mrs. Gilbert—thank you just the same," said Lora gently, but decidedly. "I'm tired, an' I don't feel much like eatin'. I'll have a cup of tea an' go to bed. But thank you just the same."

She held the kitchen door open for her caller, and watched her take the orchard path to her own farm down the side road. The blossoms were pale and fairylike in a rising moonlight. The night air was soft, with capricious little gusts, as irresponsible and velvety as the aimless blows from a baby's tiny hand. Lora leaned against the lintel of her door and let the wandering breezes caress her.

Herbert—why not? He was a personable lad, rather well liked throughout the countryside for his good looks and high spirits. They could be married, settled, tied to each other for life before she need reach the bottom of that bean pot—and Benjamin Cannon would be defrauded of nothing—only delayed in possession of what he didn't expect to possess at all. And if she were once married to Herbert—the blood rose in shamed waves to the roots of her hair, but she persisted with her thought—she would make him care so for her that he would not count the loss of the money. Then she shuddered in the misty pearliness of the night, and slammed the door upon it, facing her lamp, her denuded kitchen, and the bean pots upon the table. She went to the stove—the brief wood fire had died out. Quite deliberately she built it up again. Aloud she said:

"It is thick paper; it won't catch easy."

She brought a big yellow mixing

bowl from the pantry shelf. Slowly she poured the beans into it. She drew the paper out of the pot again.

"If she had really meant it," she cried fiercely, "she would have given it to Lawyer Simmons to keep, the same as she did the other. If she had meant it. She didn't mean it! She didn't mean it!"

She looked at her well-shaded windows. She locked her kitchen door. She walked with the paper in her hand to the stove, and, removing a lid, watched the flames leaping in the light wood below. She advanced the paper toward them. Then, with a scream of terror, she drew it back. She hastily covered the stove again, and stood, in an attitude of panting fear, crouched against the wall, the will in her hand.

"Oh!" she cried, as if to invisible presences. "Oh, no, no!" And again—hastily, feverishly, breathlessly—she restored the paper to its hiding place.

The next morning, seven o'clock found Lora Greenleaf at the post office, whence the stage started for Seymour. She carried a covered basket that seemed rather heavy. Every one was very polite to her. The postmaster was jocular as well.

"You won't have trouble in findin' you a husband now, I reckon, Lora," he hazarded.

"I'm not lookin' for a husband!" snapped Lora.

"Goin' to be gone overnight, or comin' back on the stage this afternoon?" inquired the postmaster's wife placatingly, as she tied a parcel of sugar for a child whose mother had been caught short-handed at breakfast.

"I'm not sure," said Lora. She climbed into the stage, and placed her basket carefully on the seat beside her.

"Gettin' very high an' mighty since poor Drusilly left her all her money," grumbled the postmaster as the stage rolled off.

"Pshaw! Pa, you never will learn that girls don't like to be twitted about husband-catchin' nowadays—specially to be twitted about husband-catchin'

with money. I don't blame Lora. I'd have felt the same myself."

"Awful tetchy—womenfolks!" grumbled pa.

At Lawyer Simmons' Lora was received with the dignity befitting her heirship, but despite dignity there was an amused twinkle in Lawyer Simmons' blue eyes as he surveyed the person of his caller. Was she already feeling the burden of wealth that she should appear with so tragic a brow? Poor girl—poor child! Had she any notion of the pitiful inadequacy of her four thousand dollars—she would have about so much, he computed, from yesterday's sale—to the requirements of modern life anywhere except on a small farm? He was sorry for her. She had better marry a good farmer, and let him put her money into his business. She was a pretty little thing in her shy way; she ought to get a very good husband with that little *dot*.

"I had meant to ask you about going to school," said Lora, her lips quivering; and Lawyer Simmons' respect for her promptly became a more sincere quality than that with which he had bowed over her hand when she had entered his office. "I was goin' to—going to, I mean. I wanted to learn—something. Almost anything. But now—" She struggled with the fastening of her basket. "Look at this," she said, standing and lifting the bean pot out upon the flat table in the middle of the room. Lawyer Simmons blinked at the bean pot, and then at her.

"Put your hand in," she commanded. "All the way down. You feel something?" He nodded, his look of mystification growing deeper.

"Let me empty the beans into something—the wood box will do," she said. And when the beans were thus disposed of she handed him the will. Lawyer Simmons read it. When he looked up her tragic face was suddenly shining.

"Oh," she cried, "I've been so afraid I would back out before I got it to you! I nearly burned it last night. But—I couldn't." A look, half mystery, half pride, glowed on her face. "I couldn't. It seemed like I saw the very first place and the very first people I remember in all the world—before the poor farm. I suppose they were my father and mother. So here I am."

"Lora," said Mr. Simmons, "you've been a very good girl. Damme, you've been more than that! You've been a very fine woman!"

"Well," she dropped her voice almost to a whisper, "I couldn't have them saying to me—the man and the woman I seemed to see, you know—that I had acted like a poorhouse child, and not like theirs. Could I?"

That was sixteen years ago. Hilton has grown somewhat since then. A good many of its leading citizens went over—many of them in their own motor cars—to the inauguration of the new governor a while ago. They attended the reception at the executive mansion afterward, being old friends and acquaintances of the governor and his wife. They told one another how they could remember just where the portrait of the Revolutionary Governor Hinsdale used to hang in Miss Drusilla Hinsdale's house, which was already installed upon the wall of Governor Cannon's private study. And they remarked that it seemed strange to them to see some of the daffodils and tulips that decorated the house, in defiance of the snow outside, nodding their bright heads in a big, old, brown bean pot, for all the world like that whale of a bean pot Drusilla Hinsdale had had sitting on her kitchen shelves for so long—the one, now they came to think of it, that Lora Cannon, Lora Greenleaf that was, bid in at the auction.



Anita Visits Peggy

by
**ELIZABETH
NEWPORT
HEPBURN**



Author of "Snaring the Bluebird," "Poor Peggy," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

MRS. HALE, reading on the front porch, looked up as the sound of her younger daughter's voice rang through the house; it happened that Mr. Hale was sketching his wife against the effective background of a really beautiful colonial doorway, and Mrs. Hale kept her seat and looked pained. Anita obviously needed her, and for the moment she could not answer the imperious summons.

Morris Hale looked at his sketch through half-closed eyes, made a decisive accent with a bit of chalk, and murmured absently:

"All right, Margaret. You can go. But come back as soon as you can, please."

As her mother began to mount the stair, Nita Hale came out from her room and called down quickly over the baluster:

"Don't come up, mother. I just wanted to know if I could get Justine to change my dress a little and do my hair. She gets stunning effects, and she's only sewing on that blue house gown of yours, so she has time. You don't mind, do you?"

Mrs. Hale did mind, for she needed the dress, but Anita had a fashion of getting her willful way, and this was no

exceptional occasion. Anita was twenty-three, pretty as a pink, with a fine, trim, gracious young figure. About her was that subtle essence we tritely call magnetism, and, withal, she was as simple and unaffected as she had been in a pigtail and a sailor suit at fifteen. She leaned over the rail, threw a kiss to her mother, and disappeared, while Mrs. Hale returned to the veranda. As she took her place, her husband looked up from his work with some curiosity.

"What did the household tyrant want this time?" he inquired, coming to arrange some rebellious folds in his wife's gray silk gown. Mrs. Hale, at forty-eight, had the lineless, untroubled prettiness characteristic of her at twenty-five, not even noticeably amplified; she had taken life placidly, without undue emotion, and Morris Hale found her, as well as his young daughter, so decorative that he still made many studies for his illustrations at home, despite the fact that he had a modern, well-equipped studio in town.

At his question, asked in the quizzical voice that always irritated her, Mrs. Hale flushed. It was recognized in the family that, whereas her married daughter, Peggy Payne, rarely satisfied her maternal pride, her desire that her

family should shine socially, this younger girl, Anita, was the apple of her eye, the one person who could do no wrong. She spoke with elaborate carelessness:

"She merely wanted to borrow Justine; she is going to a dance to-night."

Mr. Hale, heeding danger signals, said nothing for a moment; then he looked up and spoke very quietly:

"Margaret, I wish you would try to restrain Anita in the matter of expense. I sent a check for a hundred and fifty dollars to her dressmaker the other day, and I can't afford to go on at this rate. Ours is an expensive household, and, as you know, I am not a rich man, even though my work is in demand—for the time."

Mrs. Hale was one of those women, of whom there are many, who feel that any mention of money, above all of unease concerning it, is the acme of ill breeding! The expression of her small, well-cut features now was the expression her husband had noted every time during the past thirty years that he had made similar requests concerning that unpleasant topic—bills.

"My dear Morris, Anita is a pretty, popular girl; of course, her dressmaker's bills are larger than they used to be since she goes out much more. What can you expect, when a girl needs dancing frocks, dinner gowns, and shoes and hats to match every dress?"

Hale spoke a little grimly:

"The contrast between Anita and Peggy is interesting," he remarked, running the edges of his pastel sketch together with a sensitive thumb. "I suppose Peggy could run her house and buy her frocks and send the babies to kindergarten on the sum Anita blows in each year on her wardrobe!"

"Peggy!" said Mrs. Hale indignantly. "How absurd to compare them! If there is one thing I thank Heaven for it is that Anita has too much sense and judgment ever to marry a man like Donald Payne!"

"You mean too much sheer selfishness," said the illustrator crisply. "If she marries half so well, I shall be profoundly grateful. Donald has devel-

oped into a strong, competent man, whom any girl would be lucky to get."

Whereupon, Mrs. Hale, deeply incensed at criticism of her ewe lamb and praise of her son-in-law, rose without a word to depart. Her expression, as she captured her sheer linen handkerchief and the case for her glasses, indicated that already there were two unfortunate marriages in the Hale family, and that in Anita lay a chance for real domestic felicity. Hale looked after her retreating figure with a slight shrug of his big shoulders, but the shrug was for himself.

When a man has lived with his wife nearly thirty years, it is certainly time for him to recognize her limitations, and resign himself to the inevitable. He told himself now, a little wearily, that he was fortunate in his work, in the fact that it always found a market; indeed, that it sold more readily than it had sold ten years ago—when he had believed himself to have reached his maximum earning capacity. His work, at least, made for content, for a sense of achievement, and of being appreciated by his public, but he was growing older; he had already passed his fifty-fourth milestone on the great highway, and there were times when he was desperately lonely. He wanted Peggy nearer; Peggy, whose sympathy and comprehension he had realized only after her marriage to Donald Payne, for Peggy had been broadened and sweetened by her own experience as a wife. Also, he wanted to grow young again in the society of his rollicking, red-cheeked grandchildren. More than all, perhaps, he wanted to be reassured that in this contrary world it is sometimes possible for married folk to keep step together with the vim and joy of soldiers marching to blithe music!

II.

Anita came home that night from the Burton-McAllisters' cotillion in a flame of young rapture. She had been the belle of the evening; even her Brother Bob had not been allowed to miss a realization of her amazing popu-

larity. Men had greeted him, after the cotillion was over, with a quite exaggerated enthusiasm; those not already favored had sought an introduction to his charming sister, which blessing bestowed, Bob had found himself promptly deserted, while the more formal dignity of the cotillion changed to a mad farrago of the popular dances. Bob was not dancing, on account of a lame foot hurt in a polo game, but his uniform and his good looks counted for popularity with the girls. Incidentally, Bob was a senior at West Point, home now on furlough, a self-dependent, hardy youngster, adored by his mother, of course, and regarded by his father with secret pride, albeit treated with a rather extraordinary, shy reserve.

Bob drove Anita home at two a. m.; the Hales owned a moderate-priced automobile, which Mr. Hale took care of himself. The brother remarked casually, as Anita snuggled under her wrappings in the chill of the early morning:

"Well, kid, you looked ripping, and you made a hit, all right, with everybody except possibly the other girls' mothers. But wasn't it a bit crude to dance five or six times with Rankin Mallard?"

Anita laughed and shrugged, but was glad that for the moment Bob was occupied with the steering gear; she felt her cheeks flame as her thoughts raced over the events of the evening. She had danced several times with Rankin Mallard before they had gone out on the veranda together, into the scented, moonlit spring night. Anita never could satisfactorily explain to herself how it had happened, but she had found herself closed within Rankin's arms, his lips against hers.

"You beauty, you darling!" he had whispered. "To-night I've come to the end of my rope, Nita. I can't stay bottled up another hour. Penniless cub that I am, I mean to marry you, to cut out forever that smooth, silky Carryl chap—who looks at you as if he owned you! I loathe him and his silly millions!"

Rankin's boyishness, his combination

of love and rage, the sense of his nearness—Nita honestly thought that she had struggled to free herself, but the struggling had been purely theoretical, psychological—actually she had been weakly passive, while her cheeks had burned, and her heart had pounded, and she had been happy as she had never been before in her life. Then they had heard steps in the hall, and another couple, in search of solitude *à deux*, had found two discreet young people gazing placidly up at the horns of the silver moon.

Anita had danced with Mallard again, but she had refused to leave the ballroom. Waltzing with her, hotly regretful that they were a conventional pair of moderns, and that cave-man methods could not be applied in the present instance, Mallard had muttered, as they circled the room:

"Anita, you know what I meant out there? Just everything, dear, and you have not answered me."

Anita laughed up at him, roguish, mistress of the situation. Mallard could not read the significance of her sparkling face, for Mallard was far from analytical or versed in the wiles of woman. He was depressingly young, for all his splendid breadth of shoulder, and depressingly poor as well, earning exactly thirty dollars a week in an architect's office, and in love with an expensive young person whose dress allowance might not fall far short of his salary.

Yet Rankin comforted himself with the thought that while Morris Hale was a famous illustrator, known to the readers of the more distinguished monthlies, artists are, when all is said, limited both as to output and income.

"It is not as if they had capital, as if Mr. Hale were a rich broker or business man. He will see that all I need is time—to make Nita as comfortable as she is at home. And, of course, we'll have it out at once." He had assured Anita at parting that he would see her on the morrow.

But the morrow was a long day, many hours of which Mallard spent at his drafting board, while the objection-



Another couple had found two discreet young people gazing placidly up at the horns of the silver moon.

able Carryl, whose time was his own, drove Anita to the tennis tournament at Larchmont in the afternoon. They did not get home until twenty minutes after the Hales had begun dinner, and Morris Hale had grumbled crossly:

"I don't see why you make an exception of that Carryl chap, Margaret; he's not an attractive man to me, and while Bob may make a sufficient chaperon at a dance, when we know the hostess intimately, I do think that when a girl drives fifty miles in a car with a young man, some older woman should be with them, if only for the looks of the thing."

Mrs. Hale looked excited, but not at all disturbed; yet she, too, was listening for the whir of the motor as she answered her husband rather absently:

"They were to stop for Mary Stone, Morris; I had one of my headaches at

luncheon, and couldn't go." As she spoke, a horn sounded, the gravel on the front drive crunched protestingly, and in a moment Anita came into the room, her eyes shining, her long, sea-blue veil floating behind her. Mrs. Hale gave her one quick look:

"Why didn't you ask Mr. Carryl to stay, Nita?"

The girl dropped into her seat, and drained a glass of water before she spoke:

"Heavens, I'm thirsty! The dust is frightful. He couldn't come, dear—had a date in town."

The maid placed a cup of hot bouillon before the daughter of the house, refilled her glass, and carried her dust cloak into the hall. Mrs. Hale watched Anita with a question in her eyes. Smiling at himself, Morris Hale set aside some choice bits of a succulent young

roast duckling, and told himself whimsically: "Spoiled imp! And it's I who spoil her, along with the rest."

Later Anita disappeared, and could be heard talking over the telephone in her own room. About nine o'clock Mrs. Hale went upstairs, to find her daughter sitting before her dressing table, her hair over her shoulders, obviously in a brown study. Mrs. Hale came into the room softly, and put an arm about the girl.

"What is it, dearest? Tell mother, won't you?"

Anita looked up and smiled. Her eyes shone, her cheeks were a delicate rose color; everything about her was alluring, exquisite; she was keyed to a pitch of some subtle excitement. Mrs. Hale thought:

"If she marries Carryl, she can always look like this, always wear beautiful clothes, and live in luxury, with nobody to complain about—bills!"

"Well," said Hale, in his wife's room, two hours later, "what's up, Maggie? You look like the cat who ate the canary!"—and found the flavor disappointing!"

Mrs. Hale had two red spots in her cheeks; her small, rather childish shaped face looked unusually mature—and determined. She made an effort to speak casually:

"Anita is going up to Shawville to pay Peggy a little visit."

"What on earth—why, I expected to hear of a proposal, as proof of your pet's popularity," said Hale provokingly.

Mrs. Hale dignified to explain, mother pride insulted:

"She has had *two* proposals—within twenty-four hours; Mr. Carryl, of course, and that big Mallard boy, who naturally is impossible. But Nita is a sensitive child, and she's rather upset and excited, so I feel that it will be better for her to get away from home for a week or two. She wants to think matters over, and see where she stands."

Morris Hale was astonished, not at his daughter's popularity, but at its immediate effect. Being a mere man,

the real reason why Peggy should at this crisis be honored by a visit from her sister did not occur to him. He did, however, suppress the expression of his personal preference as to Anita's suitors, feeling that his own dislike of Carryl and his cordial pleasure in the personality of Mallard would not have the slightest influence either upon Anita or Anita's mother. The members of Morris Hale's family, with the exception of Peggy, regarded him as primarily an unworldly artist, whose advice in mundane affairs must necessarily be negligible; this despite the fact that they prospered exceedingly on the proceeds of his art!

An extract from Mrs. Hale's letter to her sister in England may throw some light on the situation for the benefit of the gentle reader:

As you know, Carryl is a mature man—about thirty-eight, I should think—a gentleman, of good family, and with at least thirty thousand a year now. When his mother dies, he will have several million in his own right. So you see— But, of course, Anita is young and impulsive; she is certainly interested in Mallard, who happens to be handsome, and I suppose dances well. Morris insists that he has ability and will some day become an architect of distinction, but in the meanwhile I do not intend that Anita shall share his obscurity and poverty! She has no idea what money means—particularly to her—so I am sending her up to visit Peggy, not because I suppose for a moment that Peggy will have wisdom enough to champion Carryl, but because I believe that a glimpse of the simple life at this time will bring Anita to her senses! Peggy with two children and no maid, eternally skimping and managing, working her fingers to the bone—well, you can see that such a mode of existence will not appeal to my spoiled baby—who hates to dress her own hair or button her shoes!

III.

Donald Payne looked across at his wife, neglecting for a moment the financial section of the morning paper. It was only half past seven, but the Payne family had been up for an hour and a half, and the day seemed well advanced.

Said Donald: "Where's Anita, Peggy? Anything wrong with her ladyship after her journey to the wilds?"

"Anita is all right," said Peggy tranquilly. "But of course she won't come

down to our early breakfast. She was tired when she arrived. I have an idea she is worried about something—probably men—they are very troublesome when a girl is twenty-two! Anyway, I mean her to have a restful visit; I want her to sleep a lot, and not be overwhelmed by the children."

Small Meg looked up with a tremor of her upper lip; her expression at the moment was much like Anita's when aggrieved. "Muzzer wouldn't let us go to Aun' Nita's room and tickle her toes, daddy—and Don and me did want to go speshully."

Don took up the sad story:

"Mother says auntie isn't *used* to children, an' that if we want her to love us we must 'go slow,' and not tickle her at least a week. But a week is a neterernity!"

Donald, senior, chuckled. "Possibly having your toes tickled at five a. m. is not exactly appealing to the average aunt, my son. But really, Peg, isn't it considered good form to treat one's guests as home folks—particularly when they are just that?"

Peggy restrained Meg's earnest attempt to make way with an enormous mouthful of cereal and converse at the same moment, circumventing her daughter's efforts in the conversational line by taking the floor herself.

"The trouble with you, Don, is that you forget. Men usually do. There was a time when you loathed having your morning sleep broken, when you said biting things about selfish parents with no consideration for people without children. Now, you seem rather to resent their freedom from responsibility—and the fact that they don't have to go to bed at dark to keep their health and their looks!"

Payne laughed outright. "Good shot, Mrs. Payne! That's probably gospel truth, but then you see I'm so conscious of my own blessings that I try to share 'em with my friends! I really do feel that unmarried people miss most of the good things of life. But if they don't realize my good intentions—and their privileges—"

"They don't," said Peggy practically.

"They pity us for the most part, and wonder why we are willing to give up society in general and theirs in particular in order to arise at six and go to bed at nine—with the coming generation. Donnie, if you upset that mug you will have to sit in your chair until school time, without speaking!"

After Donnie had safely harbored the contents of the endangered mug, the children went out to play in the yard. Donald threw down his paper, drank his last drop of "straight" coffee, and crossed the room to his wife's side. He put his arm around her.

"Do the compensations really compensate, Peg? For all you gave up when you had what Anita has now—pretty frocks and frills, all the time there is, and plenty of sleep?"

Peggy laughed, and rescued a cream jug from the vigorous sweep of her husband's arm.

"Goose! You know the answer to that silly riddle as well as I do," which "answer," conveyed by Peggy's fresh lips, seemed to satisfy Donald entirely. He left the house whistling musically, but as he passed down the path, he cocked a critical eye at Anita's drawn blinds.

"Selfish little beast!" he remarked to himself, pleasantly enough. "She's exactly like her mother—but, thank Heaven, Peggy is her father's own child."

All that first week, Peggy watched her sister solicitously; the children must not disturb Aunt Nita, they must play outdoors or go walking with Ann, who was employed to supervise the babies during the afternoon in order that Peggy might get her sewing done. She kept no maid, servants being scarce and expensive in the little Pennsylvania town; but one Ann Scholl did the laundry work, and it was her daughter, Ann Scholl the younger, who looked after the enterprising little Paynes each day for several hours. So it happened that Anita really saw very little of her niece and nephew during the early part of her visit. She was impressed, however, by the myriad achievements of Peggy, from the comfort and order of the lit-



In front of the open stove stood naughtily, experimenting Donnie, his blouse in a brilliant flame.

tle house to the piles of neat sewing that Peggy managed to accomplish between her more strenuous duties.

The girl spent a good deal of time lying on a comfortable couch in the little upstairs sitting room; she could see, from the big double window, a wonderful view of open country and of the little town lying at the foot of Reservoir Hill. The Payne cottage was halfway up this hill, the windows and porches giving on stretches of mellow woodland, on distant housetops, and the impetuous, noisy little river that fell into rapids half a mile beyond. Peggy had lived in a small, crowded flat during her first years in Shawville, and to the little family the new house represented the last word in the matter of comfort and space, although to Anita it seemed primitive enough, with its one bathroom, its dormer-roofed bedrooms, its

absence of electricity, and of many other conveniences and improvements. Yet the view was enthralling—though not so much so, to Donald and Peggy, as the fact that the mortgage had been paid off three months ago!—and the younger sister found herself gazing idly into the lovely purples and grays of sheer distance whenever she was alone, and going over and over her problem—which did not concern mortgages.

If Mallard were not so dreadfully young, so dreadfully poor—if Carryl were not so obviously eligible and so old! If she could only forget forever those moments on the veranda, between dances, when she had experienced for the first time that thrill which is the forerunner of love—if she could but allow love to come into possession!

Mrs. Hale had been cleverer than her husband would have believed possible; this glimpse of busy Peggy, a Peggy with a few gray hairs at twenty-nine, with lines across her smooth forehead, busy from morning until night, counting herself fortunate, prosperous, yet considering pennies, puzzling faithfully over weekly accounts—the whole situation troubled Anita, irritated her, and the more because Peggy's happiness was so provokingly obvious.

At this phase in her inward summing up of the situation, Anita would thank her gods for the dainty suite of rooms at home, her bedroom, sitting room, and bath, all kept in immaculate order by the devoted Sarah. And yet—Like many other girls of her day and generation Anita had been galled more than once by the fact that, after all, it was not she who was mistress in her charming home. There were times

when the supervision of even the most doting of mothers got on her nerves, when she looked forward eagerly to the day when in her own house she might entertain in her own way.

At this stage in her meditations Anita would always see Claire Holland in her mind's eye. Claire was over thirty, unmarried, with no special talent or fad, living at home, and eternally regretting that she was not married, that she was not free "to live her own life," as Claire banally expressed it. No, early marriage was wise; if it were not Rankin it must be Carryl. Anita contemplated the luxuries and perfections that money could achieve, saw her life a royal progress over a veritable field of the cloth of gold.

To wait on oneself and others, to consider oneself lucky to have found a passable laundress, to sew and mend eternally for irritating, destructive children—Anita began to pity Peggy as her mother pitied her, to call her "poor Peggy" in her mind, and all the time she was astonishingly comfortable in Peggy's despised environment. Somewhere between nine and ten in the morning, Peggy found time to bring her sister a cup of chocolate and two delicious rolls. Anita would then bathe and dress lazily, go for a spin on Peggy's unused bicycle, or for a walk, returning at half past one with an amazing appetite for the homely dinner. Being a gentlewoman, albeit self-centered, Anita asked Peggy at first if she could not help, but Peggy had laughed at her kindly.

"My dear kiddy, you'd hinder more than you would help," said young Mrs. Payne. "I have things in good running order, Donnie goes to kindergarten, you know, and afternoons both of the children go out with Ann; your staying in bed mornings gives me time to get the prosaic chores done before dinner. I really enjoy you more this way."

Which satisfactory speech relieved Anita's conscience, and as by this time Don's men friends were calling on her in the evenings, the girl began to find some of the sweets of admiration even

in these wilds. She wrote her mother one day:

The men are really amusing, so puzzled by the contrast between dear, competent Peggy and your butterfly youngest, who never cooked a dinner or made a frock in her life. Of course, Peggy is wonderful, so bright and cheerful, and never with five minutes she can call her own. Naturally, she neglects her own clothes frightfully, and seems to think a clean muslin is full dress for any occasion! If she hadn't her clear skin and good color she would be a sight, in year-before-last's styles, and she never does a thing to her hair beyond parting it in the middle and wearing it in that same old-time bun at the back of her head! And her figure—well, she is no longer the slim girl I remember whom Don married, and I should think he would be ashamed of the way she worked! As you might guess, mater, dear, the whole effect of this visit is to make me glad I'm still twenty-two and fancy free, which is precisely what I have concluded I *am*, despite my premature confidences, Mrs. Hale.

It was characteristic of Anita's incorrigible reserve, even with Mrs. Hale, that she did not speak of a letter she had just written Carryl, a letter so nearly an acceptance of that gentleman's proposal that Anita was already sighing at the thought of her own self-sacrifice—on the altar of common sense. She was rereading this rather curious missive one afternoon, and wondering whether she should mail it at once, when she remembered suddenly that a few minutes ago Peggy had called upstairs a request that Anita should keep an eye on the children in the garden.

Peggy had gone with Ann Scholl to the dentist, of whom the unsophisticated Ann was in deadly fear; of course, Anita had replied cheerfully that she would be "down in a moment." She realized now that ten minutes at least must have elapsed since her careless promise, and putting both letters in her belt she ran downstairs. As she went she heard very suddenly a shrill, frightened child's scream.

Anita ran out upon the front porch, but saw no sign of the children, and hastened back into the house, through the dining room and pantry into the large, light kitchen, which Peggy had made as attractive as any room in the house.

In front of the open stove stood

naughty, experimenting Donnie, his loose middy blouse in a brilliant flame, a flame that caught his short curls as Anita entered the room. Meg, shrieking at the top of her lungs, threw her plump self into her aunt's arms, and so a valuable moment was lost before Anita could reach the boy and wrap him in her serge skirt.

She was conscious of an agonized pain in her hand, of the child's limp little body against her breast, of the flames at last smothered under the rug which she tore from the floor, and which happened to be woolen and not straw, as were most of the kitchen rugs. Then Anita fought for breath and con-

sciousness; her hand hurt horribly, but the boy might die; she laid him on the floor and staggered to the telephone. Two minutes later she was stripping the boy's clothes from his passive little body, and pouring olive oil on his burns. Little Meg, unnoticed, crying bitterly, went into the front hall to watch the door, through which Peggy walked gayly some ten minutes later, laughing as she planned her narrative of Ann Scholl's desperate fear of the simplest dental attentions.

The next few days Anita never forgot—the young doctor ministering to the child as tenderly as he could have cared for his own; the little boy wrapped in cotton wool, his eyebrows seared off, his face almost concealed under bandages, his small, pitiful moans hour after hour; Peggy—strong, reliable, patient Peggy—with two blazing eyes in her white face, eyes that seemed to burn with fear, with zeal, with an almost intolerable love.

She would not leave the child for a moment, and for the first time in all her petted existence, Anita knew the necessity of ministering to the primitive needs of herself and others. Little Meg was hungry, sleepy; Anita fed the child, bathed her, put her to bed. Don came home at night—not to rest, but to relieve his wife; this was before they could get the trained nurse from a neighboring town, an accident in Shawville having exhausted the local supply. For many days it was Anita, with the intermittent assistance of Ann Scholl, who prepared breakfast,



The young man from New York was staring with round eyes and a dropped jaw.

straightened the house, took care of Meg, and cooked dinner.

She was clumsy at first, awkward; she found that those services which she had always regarded as mere menial duties, easy enough, but wholly uninteresting, required after all a certain dexterity of brain and hand by no means despicable. But her strangest discovery was made when she gave Meg her bath the second morning after the accident. She lifted the child into the tub, scrubbed the straight, strong little body, Meg laughing at her awkwardness—laughing because the mite had for the moment forgotten “poor Donnie that was hurted.”

Anita talked to the child as she worked, but at first her thoughts were concentrated on Peggy. Peggy, who had thanked her for saving the boy's life, and never thought of blaming her that it was endangered. Suddenly, as the dripping baby climbed out of the tub—the mite of a girl, with eyes like Anita's own eyes, a smile like hers—Meg's young aunt experienced a shock, an awakening. As she had thrilled that night in Rankin Mallard's arms, so she thrilled now as she dried the little, wet body in a great furry towel. For the first time she wanted children of her own—and then the realization of Peggy's agony came like a blow.

A woman bore children—that she might suffer as Peggy was suffering now! Anita's face was wet with tears, and Meg put up a small hand and touched her aunt's cheek.

“Aun' Nita, you cwyin'!” she said, and then flung herself into Anita's arms.

“Donnie, Donnie, I want Donnie!”

Anita dried and dressed and soothed, and when she went into Peggy's room next to the nursery, she was outwardly composed. The doctor was there, and both the parents. Donnie was apparently asleep in the inner room. Donald stood in the doorway, and quietly put the question that was asked wordlessly by Peggy's bright, dry eyes:

“Will he live now, doctor?”

“God only knows,” said the physician slowly. “I've done all I can do, but we

cannot tell yet. There is certainly a fighting chance, but that is all.”

Anita saw Peggy's face; for the first time it was tremulous, convulsed with tears that she would not shed. Donald Payne walked across the room, and took his wife in his arms.

Anita heard Peggy gasp:

“Oh, Don, Don, Don! We have each other—thank God!”

Anita picked up Meg and went downstairs quietly; there she waylaid the doctor and gave him a cup of hot coffee. He had spent most of the night with the child, coming and going, as he had another patient in a critical condition. He had also dressed Anita's burned wrist yesterday; as he was a young man of an analytical turn of mind, he said to himself, after he had drunk the coffee, which, by the bye, was as bitter as gall:

“Seemed all butterfly, the spoiled, shallow sort—but a little work and worry and pain may humanize even butterflies apparently!”

Nearly a month later a strange young man got off the train at Shawville, and walked up Reservoir Hill. He turned in at the path leading to the Payne cottage, and as he ran up the piazza steps, a tiny girl came out of the front door and stood straight in his path.

The gentleman looked down, the lady looked up.

“Are you my auntie's man tummin' from New York?” said Meg categorically.

The young man picked her up unceremoniously.

“Are you the honorable niece of the Princess Anita?” he inquired in his turn.

Anita appeared in the doorway, like the heroine in a popular melodrama answering to her cue. She wore a print house dress, a muslin apron with shoulder straps, and a rakish little dusting cap; in her left hand she trailed a long-handled soft broom, such as is used for hard-wood floors. She bowed demurely.

“So glad to see you, Mr. Mallard—glad, that is, if you don't mind associating with a very busy housemaid.”

The young man from New York was staring with round eyes and a dropped jaw.

"Immortal gods! Is this the lady I saw last in a fluffed pink cloud at a cotillion?"

Meg was injured by his tone of amazement.

"It's my muzzer's apurn," she remarked didactically, "an' my auntie has got pwetty dwesses and a gweat big hat and a pink silk coat what she wears over her nightie."

At this moment "my auntie" had two very pink cheeks, and she took off the apron and the muslin cap, and gave them to Meg to take to the kitchen.

"Everybody's away, except Meg and me, and my brother-in-law at night," she explained. "Peggy and the nurse went to Atlantic City with Donnie, who is getting well—but slowly—and I am running the house."

Mallard continued to look at her, rather embarrassingly. They were in the pleasant living room, with its four big windows giving on the view that Anita had learned to love. An exquisite silence brooded over the house; outside, the shining day seemed to flaunt perfume and promise and the glory of the year's youth. Mallard said at last:

"Nita, why did you send me that telegram, after your detestable letter five weeks ago?"

Anita looked at the landscape; she decided that she could not tell him why she had sent for him, in bald words, or why she had torn up another letter which she had written weeks ago. But she knew why; her mind held the image of that scene in Peggy's bedroom, when Donnie had seemed so close to death, and Peggy had wanted nobody but her child's father, had been conscious only of him, comforted only by him in that

crucial hour. Anita had known then that she could never make what her mother was pleased to call "a wise choice" in the matter of marriage. But as she recalled Carryl, a little bald, and world-worn and blasé, and then looked at Mallard's splendid, sturdy figure and glowing face, with his clear, frank, compelling brown eyes, she wondered whether some people might not feel differently concerning the wisdom of her selection!

Mallard was thinking only of Anita, and of that new expression which seemed subtly to alter her whole personality. He came a step nearer, taking one of her hands, her right hand, which would always show a faint scar.

"Nita, I wanted to kick myself for weeks, after that night at the dance, for a presuming young fool—daring to take for granted that you would dream of marrying an impecunious infant like myself—beautiful, sheltered, adored you! But that was at first—now I feel differently."

Anita was looking at him queerly, frowning to keep the tears from her eyes. He went on rapidly:

"I believe now that I was right, and the world—your world and mine—all wrong! I feel that a man's whole heart, when he is young and strong and—decent—is worth having; that a girl cannot often do better than marry the kid who has known her from boyhood, who has learned, through love of her, the vital needs of his nature. And Nita—being poor isn't so bad—when a man and woman begin together—honestly in love, when they are willing to work, shoulder to shoulder!"

Anita snatched away her hands and hid her hot cheeks; Mallard took her in his arms, while that old, wise, vital, ever-renewing Mother Earth held her breath—to hear the beating of their two hearts.

Modernity and Mythology

IDA M. TARBELL, the militant uplifter and magazine writer, has proved that her parents knew what they were doing when they chose her middle name. It is Minerva.

THAT BLESSED AUTOMOBILE



BY
GORDON JOHNSTONE

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN H. CASSELL

MORNING, neighbor!"

The Widow Scott looked up from the wistaria vines she was trimming, and smiled as only a woman can who has found life pleasant. Her large, handsome face was framed in a checkered sunbonnet, and she wore gloves, the better to protect her one vanity—her hands. Not that the widow was given to vanity, but having been born with such a beautiful heritage it was only her duty to preserve it. The widow had sprung from a line of Puritan ancestors, whose women, or, to put it better, perhaps, in the vernacular of old "Pop" Williams, "whose wimmen-folks never had to work." Such was not the case, however, with the widow. She worked long and well in and around her cheerful cottage, but those precious hands were always protected from the sun, wind, and snow.

Her interrupter stood in the middle of the yellow road, mopping his brow with a white handkerchief—an unusual extravagance for the village of Hauptauge. The widow exposed a perfect row of white teeth to him.

"Morning, judge!" she smiled.

"Always at work, Nancy!" he answered. "Busy hands build the wonder of the world."

The widow pushed back her bonnet from her dark hair.

"If you'll step in, judge," she said, "I'll give you a boutonniere for your compliment."

The slight, gray-haired man lost no time till he was beside her. She cut a spray of the lavender blossom and held it out to him. He smiled and retreated a step.

"Will not the Queen of Flowers," he asked, "decorate this humble servant with her own matchless hands?"

"Judge," she laughed, removing her gloves, "you're a born cavalier—not a lawyer."

"Can't one be both?" he asked, as the pretty fingers held the lapel of his coat.

"Hardly," she answered; "hardly, in these days."

Removing a pin from her rounded bosom, she secured the flower.

"Poor days!" he smiled.

"No," she returned, giving his coat a little pat in place at the collar. The movement was entirely unintentional,

but her little finger touched his brown neck. The judge started almost imperceptibly. "No," she added hastily, "rich days. What is this I hear? Is it true that you have bought an automobile?"

"Yes," he answered, with a doubtful look across the fields in the direction of his bungalow.

"And that you have a man teaching you to drive it?"

"Right again," he laughed. "And he's got his hands full."

"How's that?" she asked, replacing her gloves.

"Well," he grinned, "yesterday I thought I was a registered chauffeur, and started out alone. Everything went splendidly until I turned into the Pond Road, and then that infernal thing started to climb a locust!"

"Land sakes!" she gasped. "What did you do?"

"Sat tight," he laughed, "and let her go. We didn't get more than halfway up when we had to come down again," he added ruefully. He enjoyed the experience as if it were a joke of his own making, as, indeed, it was.

"What happened?" she asked breathlessly.

"Nothing much," he grinned; "but to-day the machine is in the hospital, and the doctor is trying to set its broken bones with profanity and a monkey wrench."

He looked across the fields at the bungalow, as if he expected to see at that distance the doctor at his work.

"Whatever made you buy it?" she cried.

The judge rubbed his smooth chin, and glanced at the widow as if he was about to disclose an important secret. The woman turned and gazed at the woods beyond. Time and again she had seen the same look in his eyes and waited. The answer struggled on his lips and died, as it had always done. His face assumed a humorous expression.

"Thought I'd have to be in style, Nancy," he smiled. "Everybody's buying 'em."

A slight suspicion of annoyance crept into the dark eyes under the bonnet.

When she looked at him it had passed.

"That's no excuse for extravagance, judge," she reproved.

"You don't call it extravagance, Nancy," he said, "for a man to spend money when he has no one to leave it to? At least, no relative nearer than my stepfather's half cousin," he added facetiously.

"But a thousand dollars, judge," she cried, "for an automobile—for *one* automobile!"

It was incredible.

"Why, that's cheap," he said. "Some of 'em cost as high as eight and ten thousand dollars. And some of 'em are rigged out with bathtubs, kitchens, sleeping berths, and——"

"Judge, you're joking!"

"No, madam, I'm not."

The widow gasped and flicked a lady-bug from her precious vines. A golden song shattered the pause that followed, like a limpid lute. A speck of yellow in the window behind the widow fluttered in its cage.

"Bob is telling you 'good morning,' judge," she smiled.

The judge looked in at the little minstrel.

"Hello, Bob!" he said. "I'm pretty fine, thank you. How are you?"

"Tell him, Bob," called the widow.

The little yellow breast sent out a trill that reverberated like a woodland echo.

"I must be going, Nancy," said the judge, glancing at his big gold watch. "It's past time for my lesson." He turned and crossed to the path. "Good morning," he smiled. "Thank you for my boutonniere."

The widow watched him stride down the little boxed walk to the gate. There was a flutter of her under lip like that of a child's who is about to lose something that it desires. At the gate, laden with honeysuckle, he turned.

"Nancy!" he called.

"Yes, Nathaniel?"

"Will you ride with me," he asked, "when I learn how to control the ma-

chine? I promise not to climb any trees."

The widow beamed her happiness.

"I'm dying to, Nathaniel," she answered.

"Thank you, Nancy."

The widow watched him up the long road till the white handkerchief fluttered at the turning. She answered the signal by waving the scissors over her head. Pulling off her glove, she looked long at the little finger that had touched his neck. Raising it to her lips, she kissed it, and was lost in the wistaria blossoms.

The clock ticked monotonously on the little mantelpiece over the stove, and the copper kettle sang merrily, as it had done these many years. Bob, the canary, was fast asleep in his little cage, that was covered with a newspaper, and the widow sat embroidering near the table, with the lamp beside her. Her full cheeks were as red as the roses under the window, and the white, beautiful fingers never looked lovelier than on that background of black silk. At least, so the judge thought as he sat at the other side of the table. With shy, furtive glances, he watched them weave the white network of azaleas into the cloth.

The couple were strangely quiet, but not more so than on any other Friday night of the past fifteen years since the judge had been calling. The weekly visit had become a part of their lives, and they accepted it as they did everything else—graciously. The judge,



"Morning, judge!" she smiled.

fiery and brave enough in the courtroom, as many an old lawyer will attest, was shy and diffident in the presence of the widow.

A crowd of youngsters passed on the road, singing and laughing. An owl hooted in the woods, and was answered by one of his family somewhere near the barn. The kettle whistled a shrill tune, and the widow rose and wet the tea. Then she placed some old delft china, with strange Japanese decorations, on the table; next came fresh-made doughnuts and fruit cake that had been baked years ago and preserved in oiled paper; spoons, sugar, and cream followed. Returning to her work, she waited for the tea to steep. The judge glanced up at the clock.

"Nancy," he asked, "time for a little chapter of the Immortal?"

"Hardly, judge," she answered; "but

you might read until the tea's drawn."

The judge arose, and went to the little bookcase near the door. Running his eye over the rows, he picked out one marked "Emerson's Essays." The New England philosopher was a passion with the judge, and he had converted the widow to his following. For forty years the Essays and the Bible had been his bedside companions, and he always

"We have a great deal more kindness than is ever spoken. Barring all the selfishness that chills like east winds the world, the whole human family is bathed with an element of love like a fine ether."

The judge read on, unconscious of the perturbation the lines had caused until he paused on the words:

"Read the language of these wandering eyebeams. The heart knoweth."

The gray eyes lifted until they rested



"Nancy," he cried, "you're more practical than an old lawyer."

fell asleep with the words of the one or the other on his lips. With the widow and alone, the judge read aloud, and it was a pleasure to hear him. There was a sonorous ring to his diction, clean-cut and pure. He was an ideal reader.

"What shall it be to-night, Nancy?" he asked, returning to his chair.

The widow thought a moment, and a smile swept over her face.

"Friendship," she answered.

The judge opened the book, found the page, and began. The first sentence brought a flood of feeling that dyed the widow's cheeks until they burned.

on the darkness outside the window. The widow bent over her work, as if to hide the confusion that, had he looked, could not have escaped him. A whip-poorwill down the road poured out his longing to his dear beloved. The frogs in the ghostly pond beyond the spectered cornfield joined their deep bass with his song in a ceaseless melody.

"The heart knoweth!"

Knoweth what? That Friendship was but another of Love's *noms de plume*; a masquerader under false garments and a platonic mask? The judge turned to the widow.

"Nancy," he said softly.

"Yes, Nathaniel?"

The big brown eyes met his own. Again his purpose failed; embarrassment crept into his bronzed features.

"That's an exquisite thought," he substituted. "The heart knoweth."

A faint mist of pain glazed over the brown eyes.

"Yes," she answered wistfully; "exquisite, Nathaniel."

The judge turned to the book and read, while a smothered sigh escaped the woman. Again he paused. He had reached the heart of the poet.

"Shall I not call God the Beautiful who daily showeth Himself so to me in His gifts?"

"Nathaniel," said the widow, "we will stop there. The thought is gracious to dwell upon."

The judge closed the book, and repeated the sentence as he had often done in the seclusion of his bungalow. The widow rose silently, laid her work in the rocker, and placed the teapot on the table. Quietly she dropped the sugar into both cups—knowing by long practice how much was required—and poured the tea. The judge was adrift on a reverie, and she did not bring him back. Presently he arose, with a happy sigh, and sat in the chair that she had drawn up to the table for him.

"Nancy," he cried, "you're more practical than an old lawyer. While I was dreaming, you were at work, making the dream come true. The tea smells like nectar."

The half hour spent over the teacups was no different from those that had preceded it on other Friday nights. There was a mild sprinkling of kindly conversation about this, that, and the other thing. When it was over, the widow collected the dishes, and laid them on a side table to be scrupulously washed as soon as the door should close behind her guest. The judge always insisted upon helping her remove them, and was always sweetly ordered to sit down and watch her do it, which he always protestingly did.

As the widow returned to the rocker, she raised her hand over her head to

arrange a wisp of hair that had strayed. Her hand came in contact with the bird cage, and the paper cover came fluttering to the floor. The judge rose and stooped for it, and his brown hand closed over hers and the paper.

The canary, awakened by the jolt, blinked in the bright light. A warm thrill burned the widow's cheeks, and the judge blushed furiously, but did not release the imprisoned, unprotesting fingers.

"Nancy," he said softly.

"Yes, Nathaniel?"

"I want—to ask you," he stammered, "if you'll——"

The canary jumped to the floor of his cage, and back again to the bar. He took one deep breath, and flooded the room with golden song.

"The heart knoweth!" he trilled.

"The heart knoweth!"

"Yes, Nathaniel?"

"If you'll——"

Again the judge faltered on the abyss of happiness. The bright fire faded in his eyes, and in its place came that hopeless indecision.

"If you'll ride with me to-morrow," he said, "in the automobile?"

The widow turned to the cage with a shadow of pain in her eyes.

"Yes, Nathaniel," she answered.

"Good night, Bob; go to sleep," she added, as the beautiful fingers pinned the newspaper regretfully over the gilded cage.

The judge crawled out from under the automobile, and looked helplessly at the widow in the seat. If the night had not been so dark, one could have seen that his face was smutted with oil and dirt. His hands and the linen duster he wore resembled a spotted leopard. Drawing a desperate breath, he dove again, and lighted matches flared under the black phantom.

"Nathaniel," came a timid voice from the seat, "suppose it should go while you are under there?"

"That would be a blessing," came the muffled voice from beneath.

"But you'd be killed!"

"Come, O Death!" he cried cheerfully.

"But what would I do? I don't know how to run it. Does this wheel make it go?"

Something that sounded like a snort came from beneath.

"Nothing on earth'll make it go," came the answer, "unless it changes its mind."

The last remark was lost in the hammering of steel on the bottom of the car, and a muffled cry of "Ouch!" issued from the earth, as if the hammer had found the judge's finger instead of its destination. The widow did not hear it. The pounding ceased.

"Whatever is the matter with it, Nathaniel?" cried the widow.

"Lord knows," he retorted sarcastically, "and He's awful quiet about it."

The judge was losing his temper. The widow looked hopelessly into the darkness. It seemed that they were in an interminable wilderness. Strangely enough, they had wandered from the main road and lost the way. Not a light was to be seen in any direction; nothing but night—Stygian night. Again the matches flared and the pounding followed. When it stopped, the widow asked:

"What time is it, Nathaniel?"

In a moment, another match blazed and went out.

"Quarter of eleven," the judge answered, crawling out and stretching himself. The widow sat bolt upright.

"Quarter of eleven!" she gasped. "*Quarter of eleven!*" And her voice trailed off into a horrified whisper: "*What will the neighbors say?*"

"There, there, Nancy," he returned; "don't worry about the neighbors. Our troubles are thick enough without saddling them."

There was a little touch of temper in his tone, and no wonder. The judge at that particular moment was bathed in a "fine ether" of perspiration, and bruised and tired and dirty.

"What do you suppose can be the matter with it, Nathaniel?" she asked.

"Darned if I know, Nancy!" he answered. "Something's wrong with the

carburetor or the cylinders, the draft, the spark plug, or the magneto. Take your choice of that menu, and whichever suits you, it is," he added, with a grin.

The expressions meant nothing to the widow, and little more to the judge. He knew where the parts were, but their mystery baffled him.

"Looks as if we'd have to walk, Nancy," he said. "I'm awfully sorry!"

"But what will you do with the automobile?" she asked. "Leave it here?"

"Yes," he answered. "Push it to the side of the road, and have a dray come and drag it away in the morning."

He assisted her out of the machine, and pulled desperately on the steering gear. Then he jumped out, and, putting his shoulder to the back of the car, he pushed. It wouldn't budge. He threw all his strength into a second assault. The machine was as solid as the Sphinx. He stepped back and groaned.

"What's the matter?" asked the widow, alarmed.

"She's glued, Nancy," he answered; "glued to her own, like Pop Williams' porous plaster. By ginger! I never thought she was so heavy! We can't leave her here in the middle of the road."

The widow came to his rescue.

"Can I help?" she asked.

"You might try."

They both shoved. The car creaked, but that was all.

"Nancy," he said, "put your back against it as you see mine, and brace your feet. So. Now, then, when I count three—shove. One!"

The widow gritted her pretty teeth.

"Two!"

A long pause, in which they both took deep breaths.

"Three!"

The widow sat down in the middle of the road, her feet in the air. The judge, prepared for the start, pushed the moving machine into the ditch. When he returned, she had regained her feet, and was smoothing her clothes and her injured feelings.

"I'm very sorry, Nancy," he said apologetically. "Did it hurt?"

"No," she lied bravely; "it only startled me, that's all."

The judge pointed straight into the darkness.

"I think we'd better follow that direction," he said. "The town can't be more than five miles away."

Five miles away! And eleven o'clock at night! And a long ride back on the train to Smithtown or Central Islip! And another ride across country by carriage to Hauppauge! It was enough to make a stout heart quail, and the widow's at that moment was far from stout. *They would reach home about three o'clock in the morning! What would the village say?*

A few moist drops fell on her face.

"Rain!" she gasped. "Rain!"

Rain it was, and the widow dressed in her rare lavender silk, her flowered bonnet, and the cashmere shawl that had come down from some great-aunt of Revolutionary days. She clutched the judge's arm in terror.

"It's only a shower, Nancy," he consoled her. "We'll take shelter under those trees until it's over."

The trees pointed out were no better as a protection than a peek-a-boo waist. The rain fell in torrents, ceased a moment, and then, as if to make up for the lost time of the respite, literally deluged them. The widow huddled close to the dripping judge, her clothes as wet as if she had been bathing in them. He patted her arm bravely, and kept up a constant flow of conversation.

All things must have an end, and the storm bore out the old adage. They crept out from under the trees, while the water trickled down their necks and started their teeth chattering. The judge's shoes emitted a noise like that which barefooted boys make when walking shin deep in the oozy mud of a marsh.

"N-a-t-t-t-than-iel?" came a shivery voice.

"Y-e-s, N-n-nan-n-n-ncy?"

"W-w-w-hat w-w-will t-t-t-the n-n-neigh-b-b-borrrrs say?"

It was a superb effort, but the widow got it out at last. What they would say was lost on the night. The widow never heard it, and it was as well that she didn't. The judge was no angel—at least, in wet weather. The expression had an ominous sound.

Suddenly, out of the darkness, loomed a great, black specter at the side of the road. It seemed to overshadow and engulf them in its very arms. The widow gave a lit-



He saw something that called forth a startled cry.

tle scream.

"A house!" The judge gasped the sentence in the tone Columbus must have used when he first saw the coast line of the Americas. "A house, Nancy!" he cried. "A house!"

She clutched his arm as if she feared that he would attack it single-handed.

"What shall we do?" she gasped.

"Do?" he answered. "Why, pull the owner out of bed, and find out whether we're in Sheol or Long Island!"

She held him back by the tail of his

coat. "He may think you're a burglar," she whispered hoarsely.

"Not if we ring his front doorbell," he grinned. "Let's."

They opened the gate and paused at the foot of the steps.

"Sit down, Nancy," he said, "while I wake them up."

The widow dropped on the steps as he ascended. She was heartily glad of the chance. The poor woman was weary. As the judge groped for the bell, his hand came in contact with a small brass plate on the door. He stooped and peered at it. Then he extracted his metal box and lighted a match. Being wet, it sputtered and went out. His fingers groped for another; but one remained. He held the match box near the plate, and scratched. The sulphur flared an instant, and, in

that flash, he saw something that called forth a startled cry. The widow rose and ran up the steps fearfully. He forced her to a seat beside him on the top step.

"What is it, Nathaniel?" she begged.

His hand found hers in the darkness, and closed over it with a mighty grip.

"Nancy," he gasped, "it's a preacher!"

He felt the start under his hand.

"Will you, Nancy?" he asked quickly, as if he was afraid of himself.

"What, Nathaniel?" came the answer, as hurriedly as his question, giving him no time to waver.

"Marry me?"

"Yes, Nathaniel."

He found her lips without difficulty, and, reaching behind him, he pulled violently at the doorbell.



Road Song

SHINING o'er the wide plain the world road runs,
 Darkling through the forests the byways fare;
 Blue the sky above them, with light of stars and suns,
 Merry hearts a-journeying that dream and dare.
 Broad the thronging highroad that leadeth far away,
 Camelot and Babylon and cities gray and old;
 Gleaming through the greenwood the little footpaths stray,
 To shining cobweb palaces that catch the morning gold.

Choose ye, merry pilgrims, each the way ye go;

Ye may take the shining world road from land to land.

But of all the roads of morning, the fairest that I know

Is the way among the meadows that we travel hand in hand.

Sweet it is to wander on the great road by the main,

Where the sea-salt winds are blowing and the tall ships pass;

But the dust lies thick and motionless along the silent lane,

Where the great trees bend and whisper to the wayside grass.

There be roads that lead to learning, and to wealth and fame,

To the clamor of the market where the merchants buy;

There be roads that lead to mountain peaks where sunsets flame,

And golden stars gleam suddenly along the windy sky.

Choose ye, merry pilgrims; many roads there be—

Highroad and byroad, old road and new;

Glad ways and sad ways; but dearest unto me

Is the little road of twilight that leads to love and you.

VICTOR STARBUCK.



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

THE women of Scotaze met in secret and ireful conference, and voted to send for Miss Lubella Bibb.

Her presence was desired urgently as leader of her sex in a crisis. A matrimonial earthquake had upheaved a volcano in Scotaze, and the crater was sputtering violently. Circumstances had scratched the surface of men's characters in town, and wives had discovered that their husbands were knaves, malefactors, and whited sepulchers. Really a dreadful state of affairs had been uncovered.

It was this way: The village homes had been put under rigid quarantine because of an outbreak of diphtheria among the children. In order that all business might not be suspended, the storekeepers of the place had exiled themselves from their homes, and had taken up their residence—the whole pack of 'em—at the Scotaze tavern.

After two days of lachrymose swapping of confidences regarding their homesickness, they had perked up and formed a club to be known as "The Scotaze Social Gentlemen," and had begun to beguile their loneliness with card games, which degenerated into lively gambling; they had solaced themselves with stiff punch compounded by the village druggist; and finally, stung

by the taunts of a visiting "drummer" for a city house, they had clubbed together, spent one hundred dollars for a prize gamecock, and conducted a "henfight" that had been staged by old Showman Hiram Look. The wives of Scotaze had burst in on that dreadful scene, led by the pastors of the village churches.

So those were the men who had posed all the years of repression as model husbands—those were the men who had managed the town affairs of Scotaze, had held the offices and made the laws, eh? Those were the men who proposed to continue as mentors of the young, models of society, and directors of affairs!

Miss Lubella Bibb, of the big city, agitator vociferous and claimant militant of votes for women, spent her summers regularly with her mother, Mary Ann Bibb, widow, on Crockett Hill, in Scotaze, and had expounded her doctrines on those visits. But she had found no soil for her seed in placid Scotaze. She was slighted, as prophets usually are in their own country.

But now, out from that bitter and baleful conference, went the Macedonian cry for a leader—and Miss Bibb hurried to the rescue.

The conference, before sending that call, had discussed the situation tem-

pestuously; but in the white heat of discussion had not forged a single sensible idea of what to do in the crisis. The only conclusion arrived at was that men were worms—no matter if they were husbands and fathers. They were not fit to be intrusted with affairs—men who would grab the first opportunity of liberty when their wives' eyes were not on them to riot and carouse and break laws. Miss Bibb must have ideas. She had lived in the city where such matters were understood. She was high panjandrum, or something or other, in a league that demanded rights for women and suppression of men. The women of Scotaze had heard her explain many times who and what she was—but they had never paid much attention in those peaceful days when men in the town had concealed their devilish dispositions.

Now the women did not care what she was; they did know that she had a square jaw and a man's stride and a harsh voice and wasn't afraid of any biped that wore trousers. She would organize, she would have plans, she would lead—and they wanted a leader; they could furnish the rank and file. She could teach them how to defy men.

During the few days that elapsed between the call and Miss Bibb's arrival the women seemed to be putting up a pretty good article of defiance, unled. Conscience had cowed the men of Scotaze more thoroughly than did their women's tongues. After all their years of narrow round between homes and stores, the men had found themselves suddenly ousted from their firesides, and the natural Adam in them had had a bit of a gallop, that was all. As to explaining it to their wives—they had gasped and gulped and waved their hands before the first outburst of indignation—and had shut up. There was nothing sensible that they could say. They slunk into their homes at the close of business, and were not able to meet their pastors' accusing eyes.

A few weeks before if their wives had met "Old Maid Bibb" at the railroad station, and had given her three

cheers and marched behind her through the village streets, bearing banners with legends that insulted all mankind, those men would have rushed from their places of business and led those wives home by their ears. Now the men lurked in the back parts of the places of business and allowed the wives to march. Conscience makes cowards; it is the one in the matrimonial partnership who "has the bind on t'other" that can tyrannize, trample, and twit.

Miss Bibb, leading her cohorts, flung that square jaw from side to side as she marched, trying to find a man on whom she could fix triumphant and blistering stare.

That evening the women had another secret conference—with a leader—and not a man dared to offer protest when his wife hurried up the supper dishes and marched out of the house without word of excuse or explanation. There was no discounting the fact that right at that juncture the women had the upper hand in the town of Scotaze.

Cap'n Aaron Sproul had viewed the parade of the embattled females from the post-office steps, and had met the glare in Miss Bibb's eyes without flinching. The cap'n had not been won to the dissipations of the men of the village; he had, in fact, protested and warned. He was the one signal example of village rectitude. It must be confessed that high moral scruples had not actuated the cap'n in holding aloof. As a man who had been much about the world, the childishness of the petty roistering had disgusted him, and he had been shut out from the festivities after he had made pointed references to "old fools running without halters." Therefore Miss Bibb's snapping eyes did not make him quail.

He carried home to his wife a report of the demonstration:

"Old Maid Bibb marching ahead with a face you couldn't dent with a marlinespike, and all them hen turkeys in this town bustling along behind her! Louada Murilla, let me tell you this: When married women find it necessary to run their matrimonial affairs by call-

ing in a slab of hornbeam like Old Maid Bibb to lead off and tell 'em what to do with their husbands, there's Trouble heaving in the quiet harbor of home. I never saw an old maid who didn't know all the ways of how not to run family affairs. For a married woman to ask an old maid how to manage husbands would be like me inviting a schoolmarm onto the quarter-deck of the *Jefferson P. Benn* to take charge in a gale when we was trying to ratch off'm a lee shore."

Cap'n Sproul had characterized the situation more aptly than he realized; Scotaze promptly found itself in a gale with a commander in petticoats.

On the morning after her arrival Miss Lubella Bibb stalked down into the village unattended. Still did conscience make cowards of the men; they stayed out of sight.

With military snap of her shoulders and bellicose jutting forward of her chin, she halted in front of the drug store.

"Come out of your den of iniquity, Judas Bibb, betrayer of trusting women!" she called. "Come out here where I can talk to you in the face and eyes of this town. I have no secrets to hide—I want all to hear."

One man hove in sight and hurried up to her. He was "Old Man" Jordan, with his wooden firkin on his arm, on his way home from Boadway's store. He was consumed with curiosity, as usual.

"Come out, Judas Bibb!" she repeated.

"Seems as though you ought to know the first name of your own cousin better'n that," reproved Jordan. "His name is Sam."

"To you, as a poor specimen of the two-legged worms of this town, I want to say that a spider who mixes poison in his back shop for the ruin of his fellow citizens is no longer a cousin of mine. Take that word to the slimy reptiles in this village who don't dare to face me. Once more," she shouted again, "come out here, Bibb, the Judas!"

"I've heard they do things in a queer

way up to the city," observed Uncle Jordan, "but I'll swear I didn't know before that this is considered a genteel way of coming to call on a relative. I hope my city kin will stay away from me until the style shifts."

There was no indication from the drug store that Cousin Bibb cared to acknowledge relationship at that time.

Miss Bibb carried a flannel bag of vivid red, and the bag sagged suspiciously. She dove her hand in and produced a brick.

"Third and last call, Judas! Come out!"

"Heave it!" suggested Uncle Jordan maliciously in the pause that followed. "There's nothing like waking a town up a little. I hate to see it look so dead along the main street."

Miss Bibb did not seem to require any suggestions. She evidently had her own program well mapped. She poised herself, took good aim, and hurled the brick through Druggist Bibb's front window. It was a noble crash, and produced an audience for her in double-quick time.

The first who appeared was Druggist Bibb himself, livid with rage, and screaming threats and diatribe. He yelled for a constable; he had excellent command of language, and had much of the Bibb family history at his tongue's end. He was especially well posted as to Lubella Bibb, her branch, her progenitors, and he shared his knowledge with his townsmen, who came crowding close to listen.

Miss Bibb produced another brick.

"I'll drive the next one down your throat," she declared, with venom, "if you don't close your mouth! So you have all come out at last, you cowards, have you?" She swept the throng with flashing eyes. "Ah, I knew how to flip over the rock under which you were hidden like bugs in a barnyard. You're only insects! Now you have come into the open, and I knew how to get you there. Do you get a lesson from what I've just done? I have begun with *him*. That shows you what kind of a character I've got. Cousin, or brother, or father—it's all the same to me if



She poised herself, took good aim, and hurled the brick through Druggist Bibb's front window.

a man does wrong! I've started in with a Bibb to show you what the rest of you may expect."

"Excuse me, marm," interposed Blacksmith Snell, who may have been emboldened by the fact that his windows were not worth smashing; "but will you kindly inform us what particular good you think it is going to do you or the women of this town to go around whaling bricks through windows and destroying property?"

"She is imitating them she-terrors in foreign parts," suggested a voice on the outskirts of the throng.

"I am imitating no one!" insisted Miss Bibb. "Women are rising all over the world to demand their rights. If they do the same things to bring dismay to tyrants, it is only because

women have the same instincts. I want to thank you for intimating that I'm up to date. You didn't show your mean heads to me yesterday when I led my band of noble women past these stores; you hid away this morning. I want to show that blood relationship cannot keep me from my duty; I want to show that the women have got to be heard; I want to get you out of your holes where I can talk with you. One brick has done it! Hurrah for the brick! say I. It has made men sit up and take notice abroad—it has done the same here in Scotaze.

"Now, you disgrace to the name of the Bibbs", if you ever mix another mess of swill in that trough in your back room for the pigs of this town, I'll come and blow your dirty den off the face of the earth with a charge of gunpowder! To the rest of you in hearing I'll say that I have come

here to reorganize this town and give women what belongs to them. The men here have shown that they are not fit to run things. I have come here just in time. Lucky Providence has hated this business. Day after to-morrow Scotaze holds its annual town meeting. I serve notice that I shall lead my band of noble women into that town house, and I warn you that you better be careful how you vote, and who you vote for! The rascals must be weeded out. Alas, we can't vote—not yet—but, thank the Lord, there are things we can do!"

She replaced the brick in the red bag with a care which indicated that she would have further use for it, and departed with militant quickstep.

The men of Scotaze looked at one another sheepishly and ruefully.

"It's time for us to put our foot down good and hard," declared the injured and incensed Druggist Bibb, kicking at the bits of shattered glass on his platform. "I mixed that punch for you, but I didn't hold any of you and pour it down your throats with a funnel. I'm getting most of the gurry of this thing pasted onto me."

"It ain't our business to mess into your family affairs," stated Odbar Boadway. "You'll have to settle them for yourself."

"Family affairs!" squealed Bibb. "I kick her out of my family! I'll be tomhumped if I don't go up to the legislature and have my name changed. I can handle my wife. The rest of you go home and do the same."

"There ain't much use in trying to handle either wolves or women when they have banded themselves into a pack and are running behind a leader," said the postmaster.

"Arrest her!" yelled Bibb. "I'll swear out a warrant and hand it to Constable Nute."

"That's just what she'd like, and all the rest of the women would be worse than ever," declared Boadway. "You'd make her a martyr for the sake of the women of this town, and she'd get out on bail, and would raise Tophet worse than ever."

"Are you going to stand around and suck your thumbs and let her belt blazes out of store windows and run our town meeting?" asked the druggist, cracking his fists together.

Their faces did not indicate any very enthusiastic desire to do anything except stand around.

"We're a nice, able-bodied crowd of men in this town if we're going to let the women run the place simply because we asserted our independence and had a little fun on the side," Bibb went on.

"I tell you, when women get organized, with a leader who starts throwing bricks before she begins to talk, there ain't much of anything sensible to be done with 'em until the craze is over," said the cautious Boadway.

"Then let the 'Social Gentlemen' or-

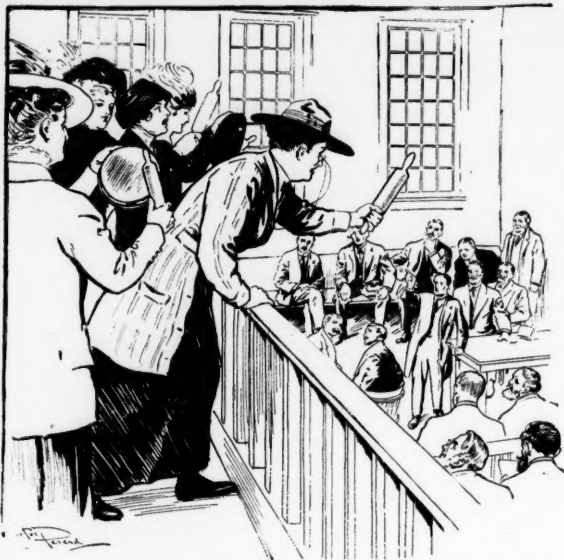
ganize, dammit!" bellowed the druggist. "If they want a leader, why, I'll lead!" He flapped his hand against his breast. "Then we'll see which side of the Bibb family will beat out."

But his townsmen merely gazed at him with moody evidence of their lack of faith in his efficiency as a leader, and departed to their several places of business.

Boadway expressed the sentiment of the dissolving mass meeting when he growled to those in hearing as he trudged along the sidewalk: "It's easy enough for a man to talk bold when he's mad enough. But I know what the condition is in my own family better than he does, and the rest of you probably know your own business best, too. Just at the present time, gents, my wife is too mad to be handled in any sensible way, according to the rules and regulations made and provided in marriage. I don't ever believe in damming a woman; I don't much believe in damming their feelings. The dam will bust, and the freshet will carry away everything from the cook stove up to the motto 'God Bless Our Home.' My wife's feelings are running free and easy just now, open channel, and I propose to let 'em run. They'll run out after a while."

On the day of Scotaze's annual town meeting it was manifest that the concerted sentiment of the menfolks favored letting the feelings of the women run.

Though Miss Bibb had voiced grim hints in the village square as to what might be expected from that "band of noble women" when she had led them into the town house, no voter by word or gesture stayed them when they appeared at the door. For that matter, it always had been the custom for the women of the town to attend the annual meeting as spectators at a show that usually proved more or less diverting in a mild degree. They were in the habit of bringing embroidery or other fancywork for their hands, while their eyes and ears were busied by the scenes and oratory below on the floor of the house. They had never



It was clamor hideous and without cessation.

tried to understand just what their menfolks were about; it had served simply as a day's outing, and they had swapped candy and gossip blandly.

But there was nothing bland in the demeanor of those who marched to the town house behind the redoubtable Miss Lubella Bibb. They seemed to have imbibed so much of her martial spirit that their very faces were transformed. Wives and mothers who had always been as meek as rabbits and as docile as moolies tramped up the stairs to the gallery, their chins outthrust, their eyes darting defiance.

Of all rebels, most terrible are the meek who have long endured patiently, who are inspired by a cause they think is just, and who feel for the first time a sense of freedom and of power.

Men who had wives in the gallery cast up there side glances of apprehensiveness, and men who did not have wives there were impressed by the general spirit of uneasiness. The married men were fearful because they understood the latent possibilities in aroused

women; the bachelors did not understand, but they feared woman's unknown quantity.

But no one in the crowd of men seemed to be able to hazard a guess as to what those women proposed to do. One thing was apparent from their demeanor: They were not there merely to adorn that gallery.

They were grimly silent while the town clerk read the call for the meeting. The town clerk was a meek little man who taught a class in the Sunday school and had not engaged in the dissipations that had disgraced so many of his fellow

citizens. He was allowed to finish his job and retire unscathed.

Then a bearded voter from the back districts arose and nominated Lawyer Alcander Reeves as moderator of the meeting. It was an honor that had been tendered to Squire Reeves regularly during many years, and no one had ever said him nay.

"In the name of the noble and self-respecting women of this town, I protest!"

It was the rasping voice of Miss Lubella Bibb. She was on her feet, and leaned over the rail of the gallery.

"A man who plays cards for money and breaks the laws and encourages lawless men is a poor kind of a lawyer and a worse kind of a man, and I say that Alcander Reeves is not fit to preside at a public meeting or to be upheld as a model for the young."

A shrill voice broke the shocked hush that followed Miss Bibb's speech. It was the voice of Druggist Bibb. He was on his feet, too, standing in the midst of his fellow citizens. He vi-

brated an excited forefinger at his relative in the gallery.

"I'm going to say something in the name of the men in this town. I'd like to inquire what right, liberty, or license that old cat up there thinks she has got to tell the men of Scotaze anything about their business in town meeting?"

That was as far as Mr. Bibb was allowed to proceed—or it may be more correct to state that, though he proceeded, he was not audible. Those who were versed in the science of lip reading might have understood that he was expressing his opinion of that branch of the Bibb family represented by Miss Lubella. But even those nearest him heard not a word.

From under her cloak each woman in the gallery produced armament which the home pantry had furnished—a baker tin and a rolling pin. They began to beat the tins with all the strength of their arms. It was clamor hideous and without cessation. Miss Bibb imperiously motioned for Drug-gist Bibb to sit down. When it became apparent to the voters that the loyal din makers proposed to keep on until Mr. Bibb did subside, several men pulled him down onto a settee.

"If you let that vile reptile open his mouth again," declared Miss Bibb, when she had checked her anvil chorus with a gesture, "I'll see to it that while he has his mouth open you'll have to transact business here with the deaf-and-dumb sign language."

"Excuse me, marm," said the bearded voter who had put in nomination Squire Reeves, "and let me get in a sensible remark before you start up that dingbat serenade again. We've got to have Squire Reeves preside here to-day—he's the only one in town who understands parliament'ry law."

"If that's the case, I'll take a decent man and post him on how to conduct a meeting," stated Miss Bibb. "It's one of my lines of business in the city; I teach parliamentary law to women's clubs—and there are more women in this country who know parliamentary rules than there are men who know.

Men don't know enough to hurt them, anyway."

The women indorsed that sentiment, viva voce.

Lycurgus Snell, who had once before braved Miss Bibb's tongue, arose, and said that the men of the town were able to run a town meeting without advice from "a bilious old maid." He seconded the nomination of Squire Reeves, and moved that Constable Nute be sent into the gallery and instructed to—

Rolling pins and baker sheets drowned out the rest of Mr. Snell's remarks. He sat down after a time. The roar of the bulls of Bashan could not have been heard. Citizens who were near Snell implored him to sit down before they were driven mad by the din in the gallery. Many of the voters rushed out of doors, their hands over their ears.

Constable Nute stood upon a settee, and took advantage of the first silence.

"If there is any more racket in that gallery," he declared, "I shall come up there with a posse and clear it. I shall arrest the ringleaders."

Promptly a bristling battery of bran-dished rolling pins was exhibited over the gallery rail.

"Come up!" invited Miss Bibb. "Come one—come all! We'll beat out the brains of the man who interferes with us in our duty!"

"A nice figure you'll make coming up here, Zeburee Nute!" stated his wife, catching his eye. "I'll take the first crack at you!"

"I'll say now, as I said before, there ain't anything sensible to be done with women or wolves when they're running in a pack," mumbled the post-master to Boadway, who sat beside him. "Get up and move to adjourn till to-morrow, till we can confer and get this thing straightened out."

A motion to adjourn is always in order—it seemed to be especially in order just then. The meeting dissolved with alacrity, and the women marched triumphantly away behind Miss Bibb.

Then, on three successive days, fol-

lowed three abortive sessions of the Scotaze town meeting. Every attempt to reflect the men who had served the town in the past as officers was greeted with such uproar that no business could be transacted. Those men in town who had read accounts of similar occurrences in far-distant countries had supposed that the women who would cut up such capers must be of some strange species, vitriolic, insané. The men of Scotaze were not eminent as psychologists; they did not understand how hysteria can make the superwoman from the plain, domestic sort. They had always supposed that the women in their kitchens were placid tabbies; they discovered that they had been harboring what now appeared to be wild cats. Miss Bibb kept them lashed up to a furious mood.

Furthermore, Miss Bibb had submitted a list of town officers made up of the most notoriously henpecked men in Scotaze—an impossible, a ridiculous, slate. It meant that if those men were elected to office the women would run the town.

"Let me name the officers of a town, and I don't care who throws the votes for 'em," declared Miss Bibb to her loyal supporters in secret conference. "They haven't given us votes for women yet, and they won't do it until they are taken by their throats and shaken well; but there are other ways for women to sway and prevail. We'll make this a test case here in this town—and it's a plan that I'm going to spread broadcast to the four corners of this nation. The baker tin and the rolling pin will go down in history as famous as Washington's hatchet and Abe Lincoln's rail-splitting ax. And if they want to feel those rolling pins on their heads, instead of hear them on the baker tin, let them dare to come into that gallery and lay hands on one of us! The whole world will be looking at this town in a few days. Let's stand firm!"

On the other hand, the voters of Scotaze were standing firm. No man with self-respect would vote to put over himself a lot of doddering "old fubs"

who would do exactly as their wives told them to do.

Hysterical fanaticism had swept the women of the town off their feet; they ranted at home, and kept up their devil's tattoo in the gallery of the town house when the men tried to do business. A grotesque deadlock was on.

On the evening of the third day Cap'n Aaron Sproul went to his front door, answering a ring. He scuffed in carpet slippers, held a newspaper in his hand, and looked over his spectacles at the person who came in. This person was bland and cooing, tall and spare, and his long gray hair hung down in ringlets. That sort of top-hammer always stirred the cap'n's suspicion and resentment.

The stranger person took his own time in settling himself in a chair, deliberately crossed one long leg upon the knee of the other, leaned back, and set his gaunt fingers tip to tip like unshingled rafters.

"This is my first visit to your admirable town, Captain Sproul," beamed the stranger. "I have come directly to you after my inquiries at the tavern, for I learn that you are the most prominent and most level-headed man in the place."

"They all start in on me just that way—but it never works," stated the cap'n.

"Who, if I may ask?"

"Book agents, nursery-stock peddlers, insurance fellers, gold-mine grafters, gold brickers, fakes, frauds, and tinhorners."

The stranger did not lose a bit of his bland smile.

"I don't find myself included in any of the classes you have mentioned, Captain Sproul. No, most certainly not."

"Well, what have you got to sell? Out with it so that I can say no and start you on the way to a real sucker," snapped the cap'n ungraciously.

"I have nothing to sell. I am not engaged in vulgar trade of any sort. I have no need of any financial assistance of any kind. My name is Foster John Tinker."

"What's your line of business?" inquired the still skeptical cap'n.

"I have no business. I am a poet and philosopher."

"I'm well stocked up on philosophy, and don't buy poetry," stated the cap'n, flapping his newspaper open as a hint that he had matters of his own to attend to. His thumb was on the column headed "Shipping News."

"I do not make commodities of them—I do not peddle them. I employ them wholly for my own benefit and consolation and guidance. As a poet who has deep insight into the human soul, when that soul has expressed itself by the written word—a poet who sees into

prominent and most level-headed citizen."

It was perfectly plain that now Cap'n Aaron Sproul was more interested in his visitor than in ship news. He pulled himself to the edge of his chair, and looked the new arrival up and down. Mr. Tinker smiled broadly and tolerantly.

"When I knew all at once that I loved, Captain Sproul, and love lashed the flanks of my soul with fire-tipped thongs—you see that I am a poet—then I stayed not, I hesitated not. I arose and sped toward my loved one. She had left the city; she had come afar into the desert, if I may use that



"I have fallen in love with the soul of one of your town's fair daughters."

the mystery of high aspirations in others who have confessed themselves to me through the mediumship of the pen, I have fallen in love with the soul of one of your town's fair daughters. I refer to Miss Lubella Bibb."

Cap'n Sproul dropped his paper.

"Mind you, now, I am speaking merely as a poet—my soul is speaking unbiassed by evidence of the eyes. I have never seen Miss Bibb. But we have had long epistolary communing. As a poet, I feel that now, when I have made up my mind that I understand her soul, I should rush to her. I have rushed as far as this—to her town. But as a philosopher I feel that before I meet her face to face I should make certain inquiries from the town's most

metaphor for your beautiful town. But the desert did not me dismay—for love lashed me on. But now that I am near—now that eye and tongue are about to corroborate what soul has spoken to soul, philosophy upraises monitory finger, and says—"

"Prob'ly what he says is interesting and to the point," broke in the cap'n; "but I wish you'd let me stick up a finger and say something right here. It may be something to your advantage. Do you mean to tell me that if your philosophy doesn't rear up behind and kick the stuffing out of your poetry after you meet Lubella Bibb you are thinking of marrying her? Now, let's you and me drop all that slush talk and get right down where we can under-

stand each other like men. Are you chasing her up, meaning to get hitched if she suits? Excuse blunt question, but I'm interested."

"Object, matrimony," has been the foundation stone of the correspondence," stated Mr. Tinker, with dignity.

"Then I can talk business to you in the name of this town, and will be backed up. If you'll shut your eyes and gag that philosophy of yours, and marry Lubella Bibb by special license on the dead run, and start on a wedding trip that will take you so far off that she can't get back here till next summer, the men in this town will pass the hat and pay all bills, and give you a send-off better'n the Lord of Argyle ever got on his wedding day."

Mr. Tinker evidently had a streak in him that was neither poetry nor philosophy. His eyes narrowed slightly. There was a glint of business sense there.

"Why all this haste to get rid of one of the town's fair daughters—this haste and jubilation?"

"That isn't it," stammered the cap'n, seeing that he had overreached in his enthusiasm. "No hurry about getting rid of her—that is, no great and special hurry. What I mean is that she's popular—and the bunch round town would like to do something handsome for her, provided you and she made a romance of it and got married in a hurry. Yes, that's it," he went on, brightening as he got back his self-possession. "It's the romance of the thing—sudden marriage—being whisked right off in the height of her popularity—that will catch us here in town and stir up our enthusiasm. Now, say, if you'd grab right in to-night and elope over to the town of Vienny and get married, it would be a mighty popular trick—and we'd sure give you a great send-off. All the business men in this village would join in. I ain't saying just how much they'd chip in, for I've had short notice, but you won't find any chance to complain."

"I do not approve of elopements," said Mr. Tinker, with decision. "Poetry might commend such a step, but

I'm glad to say that in me philosophy holds a tight rein on poetry."

"Drop the reins onto the dashboard, and hoorah, and let her go for once in your life," urged the cap'n. "This is a good time to do it. You'll have the business men of a whole town right behind you. Probably never'll have such another chance in all your life. Come on, now! This is a starry night for a ramble. I'll subscribe fifty dollars myself to start the purse, seeing that she is a Scotaze girl and deserves a good send-off."

But though Cap'n Sproul clapped his hands together and forced a smile with painful effort, the cautious Mr. Tinker refused to be carried off his feet. He drew those spreading rafters of his fingers close together.

"How old is this fair and popular daughter of Scotaze, and what kind of a looking girl is she?" he inquired.

"She's between twenty and—and—well, women keep them things pretty well to themselves," faltered Cap'n Sproul. "The main point is she ain't young and silly. A girl that's young and silly wouldn't be any fit mate for a philosopher. As for looks—well, of course every man has an opinion of his own on what constitutes looks in a woman. That's why all the rest of the men in this town ain't after my wife. Speaking of Miss Bibb, we'll say that she is upheaded and coming. Good knee action. Knows the world, and doesn't need blinders."

"I have heard horse swappers describe their wares in that fashion, but it doesn't give me much of an idea how a woman may look," stated Tinker stiffly. "I'll say to you quite frankly, Captain Sproul, that there seems to be a mystery about Miss Lubella Bibb. As a philosopher, inclined to temper poetry with carefulness in all decisions, I decided to come to her native town for information, and now I'm glad that I came. I hope that I shall find your enthusiasm quite generally backed up by others."

He rose and started for the door. The cap'n chased him.

"Begin with the women—tackle the

wives of the business men of the town, and you'll find that she's a regular popular idol," he urged. "Talk with the women first. I'll meet you at the post office in the forenoon at ten o'clock, and take you around and introduce you to the men. Don't talk with the men till I see you. They might be bashful in letting out their praises to a stranger."

Mr. Tinker accepted this offer with dignity, and departed.

The next morning Cap'n Sproul was a daybreak Paul Revere, and succeeded in impressing upon the business men of the village that they must join in a concert of adulation of Miss Lubella Bibb even if the words choked them. Moreover, in hasty conference, another diplomatic move was decided upon. At the adjourned town meeting of that day Miss Bibb's candidate for moderator should be elected as a sop to that lady in order that she might not appear in her usual rôle of termagant.

"We'll elect old Tingley, and then she possibly may grin for once in her life, and we'll have Pote Tinker where he can see her smile," advised the cap'n. "That may help a little, though it's all desperate business once he lays eyes on her. Then we'll adjourn the meeting for a week. That will give the women time to cool down, and the pote can start in courting her, and if she has got any soft side to her, as he claims on account of them letters she has written to him, then perhaps we can fetch it around and get rid of her. A lot can happen in a week, gents. But there's one thing that mustn't happen or else it's all off. He mustn't see her stand up in that gallery and play hyena in petticoats, the way she has been doing. A motion to adjourn is always in order, and old Tingley can't hurt anything but our sense of pride."

Cap'n Sproul's program went through. Miss Bibb did smile, and not a rolling pin or a baker sheet was displayed.

Something more important happened at the close of the meeting. Fortified by the encomiums that the men of Sco-taze had passed on the lady, and with

those men looking on with breathless interest, Mr. Tinker walked up to Miss Bibb, hat in hand, accosted her on the town-house steps, and introduced himself. Those who were near said she blushed. At any rate, she took his outstretched hand.

She did not lead her women in triumphant parade through the main street that day. She nodded carelessly to her adherents, stuck her hand inside the thin elbow that Mr. Tinker obligingly hooked out at her, and walked off with him to her home on Crockett Hill, leaving her band of militants muttering among themselves.

"It's working! It's working fine!" cried the cap'n, when the conference of business men had again been assembled hastily. "She has got a soft side to her. And when she walked off with the pote them women felt slighted and disappointed. I know human nature. I know women. If Old Maid Bibb gets to courting, she'll be like all the rest of the women, and then she won't be a leader any longer. I reckon this is going to be a self-acting proposition."

"You may know women and human nature," declared the unreconciled druggist, "but you don't know the Bibb family. That old cat has set her teeth into this thing, and you can't shake her loose. Do you think for one minute that Old Mophandle Poet there is going to take up her mind enough so that she's going away and leave this town in peace? You ought to know better. She'll come back onto the job rested. She'll pull him into the mess, too, and have him up in that gallery next week with a tin wash boiler and a hickory club, doing the solo part in that anvil chorus."

"I've got to admit that it seems that way to me," put in the postmaster. "She has got too far into the thing to leave go now."

"You ain't reckoning on love and on human nature," insisted the cap'n. "She has got a soft side to her, I say, and that feller has found it. I say again, a lot can happen in a week. In seven days from now that old cat will

be licking cream off'm her whiskers and purring while the pote smoothes her back. Listen to me!"

That afternoon Foster John Tinker came to the tavern and secured his valise. He returned to Crockett Hill to the Bibb home. That news, when disseminated, added to the cap'n's reputation as a diplomat and a prophet, but left Druggist Bibb profanely unconvinced. He declared that if the poet could be kept aloof from Miss Bibb there might be a chance of fooling him, but that now it was all off. Living in the same house with that woman, he said, would wreck all the poetry and philosophy in any man, and he declared that he expected to see the poet come through the village at any moment, bound for the railroad station on the dead run.

At the end of three days Cap'n Aaron Sproul was devoured by curiosity in regard to that seed he had planted in the Bibb family. Poet Tinker did not appear among men. No word came from Crockett Hill. Miss Bibb held aloof from her "noble band."

Cap'n Sproul understood perfectly well that he ought not to go to Crockett Hill and pull up that seed in order to have a look at it and ascertain that the root had started. He also knew and valued the adage that "a watched pot never boils." But that curiosity refused to be denied. He went up to make a call, on the plea that he desired to return the one Mr. Tinker had paid him, a consideration of etiquette that would have made some of the cap'n's friends grin if he had confided in them.

He found a condition of peace that interested and delighted him. Mr. Tinker was holding a skein of yarn for the Widow Bibb, and he continued this occupation after the cap'n had entered.

The Widow Bibb was a plump and comfortable matron, with mild ways and soft voice, and the cap'n, in his sense of satisfaction, complimented her highly on her pink cheeks.

When the hue in the widow's cheeks deepened, the cap'n remarked jocosely that Lubella better take care of her

looks and her laurels or else her mother would be cutting her out.

"There's no use talking," the cap'n pondered while he surveyed the widow with interest. "If a woman goes to work pounding her face up against hard things in this life her face will get hard, too."

Then he inquired genially as to the whereabouts of Miss Lubella Bibb.

Mrs. Bibb informed him that her daughter was upstairs in her room, writing out a speech on votes for women.

"And mapping out a campaign against the tyrant Man," added Mr. Tinker, without enthusiasm.

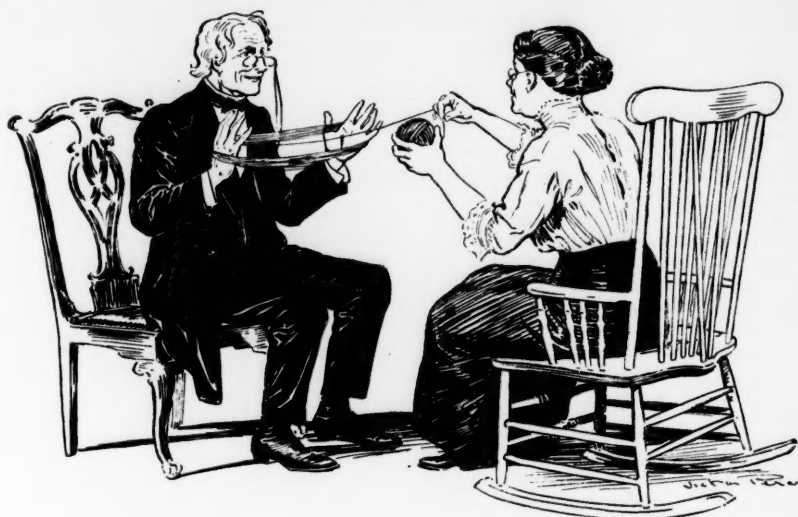
"Seeing that I'm right in the bosom of the family, and can talk all free, I think she ought to be attending to something else right now," stated Cap'n Sproul, with severity. "When a pote has come all the way to court, like you have, Tinker, she ought to be out walking in the gloaming with him—or wherever it is lovers walk. I'm a man that's old enough to know what ought to be done, and if you want me to drop a word to her, call her down. I ain't bashful in speaking out what's on my mind."

With a bit of impatience, Mr. Tinker said that he felt he could handle his own affairs. He went further, and said that he did not understand why Cap'n Sproul had come messing around there, anyway. He did not like to have his business made such public property.

"Perhaps it's because Miss Lubella Bibb is considerable of a public woman," stated the cap'n.

"Yes, and that's the principal trouble in all this case, sir. I wish you would take into consideration my sensitiveness as a poet, and go away."

Then the poet and philosopher turned his thin shoulders deliberately, and displayed his back to the cap'n, and the widow went on winding yarn with complete absorption in the business in hand; and Cap'n Sproul arose and departed, feeling very uncomfortable. He had a seaman's instinct for other disturbances than gales of wind.



Mr. Tinker was holding a skein of yarn for the Widow Bibb.

He knew that something was in the air.

Two days later he found out what it was.

Druggist Bibb hailed the cap'n excitedly when the latter was on his way to the post office:

"Talk about you for a manager and a planner, Sproul! You couldn't manage cats in a milk-drinking contest!" he squealed wrathfully. "You have gone to work and nailed us to the cross in this town. Don't you know what has happened?"

"From a cursory look, I should say that you'd been sampling some more of that hoss-trough punch of yours, Bibb."

"A man in this town who has its interests at heart has got an excuse to get drunk to-day. That old cuss of a Tinker you have been teaming around here has gone to work and eloped with my aunt."

"With your cousin, you mean!"

"No, with my aunt. Lubella just went through this village on her way to the railroad like a comet passing a way station. But she won't catch 'em.

They got away on the train last night while she had her old whittled-out nose stuck into a speech she was writing."

"Well, what's the matter?" inquired the cap'n. "It's a self-acting proposition that's working one way just as well as if it was working the other way. If she's gone chasing 'em we've got rid of her."

But Druggist Bibb understood his own family too well to be encouraged by that view of the affair.

"Say, Sproul, a flaxseed poultice can draw a better conclusion than you can! That poet has got Mary Ann Bibb, a good farm with her, and her twenty thousand dollars in the savings bank. And Lubella ain't got a cent, and she has been looking forward to what her mother would leave her with just as much confidence as though it was hers already. Talk about being a poet! That fellow knows what he's doing, all right. And they'll be back home here the minute they get married. And Lubella will be on their trail. And if she has been hyena before she'll be a tiger now. She'll camp here and take it out on this town. That's just what she'll do.

That's what women like her will always do. This town is in for a——"

"I don't think so," stated the cap'n, with great equanimity, strolling away.

It came to him that he had suggested to Tinker the town of Vienna as a handy Gretna Green, and it was probable that Tinker, a stranger, had remembered the suggestion.

The cap'n posted himself at the railroad station to await the next train from that direction.

A bland groom and a radiant bride alighted when the train stopped.

"As your first acquaintance in town, Tinker, I'm the first to offer congratulations," said the cap'n, intercepting them. "But I feel that I'm entitled to ask you why you didn't stick to first plans and projects, Tinker."

"I'm a poet, with a high ideal of domestic bliss," replied Mr. Tinker, with dignity, "and the domestic side of Miss Bibb did not appeal to me. She has no domestic side. As a philosopher——"

"You needn't bother to give me that side of it," said the cap'n brusquely. "You might lie about it—and that's bad business on a wedding day. I know what the farm is worth, and how much money there is in the savings bank. I state that so that we three can get right down to business. You can use Lubella all right financially, late Widow Bibb, but if you let her come back into your house you'll have a three-ringed circus there, night and day performance, that will beat anything that Hiram Look ever put out on the road."

"Lubella does not belong in a real home," declared the new Mrs. Tinker, with emphasis. "I have often told her so. Her ideas have kept me stirred up for many years. I shall be glad to settle to domestic bliss with a loving companion who feels as I do." She gave Mr. Tinker a melting look. "I shall not cast Lubella off, but she must go away from here and let me alone; otherwise I shall not allow her one cent. That's settled!"

"I'm quite a hand to talk straight business to any one," said the cap'n, "and in this affair an outside party can put the thing up to Miss Lubella and

save you a lot of wear and tear on feelings. If you and she get into a talking match when she hits town you won't get much of anywhere for some time. What say if I meet her and lay the law down to her, and then bring her around for a settlement when she is well tamed?"

"I know that you are a square and level-headed man, Cap'n Sproul, and I'll be much obliged if you'll take this thing off my hands and deal with that headstrong girl. The thing has been worrying me. I hate disputes. Now that I'm married, I want to live happy ever after," said the bride, giving her new spouse another soft glance.

After it was all over—so far as the settlement with Miss Lubella Bibb was concerned—and that cowed lady had departed in accordance with stipulations made, Cap'n Sproul went around to Druggist Bibb's store to inform that gentleman with bland pride that the self-acting proposition had worked, and that, though public spirit operates in such as Miss Bibb when all is plain sailing, personal interest can dull desire for self-immolation in many a case of fanatical zeal.

"But even if she is taken care of and driven out of town," whined the irreconcilable Bibb, "there's the rest of the women all budged up and ready to spit fire still."

"You have been too busy mixing doses for stomachs to understand the mind and human nature," stated the serene cap'n. "Lubella Bibb went to work and toiled on a man who dropped her at sight and ran away with her mother, property and all. When it comes to matters like that—matters of love and so forth that women understand—they've got a great sense of humor. The women of this whole town are laughing now fit to kill. When women get to laughing they can't bother with politics and grudges. This thing is all settled."

And, sure enough, it was. The men went ahead and held their town meeting, and the women brought fancywork into the gallery instead of rolling pins and baker sheets.

To Restore Tired Nerves

By Dr. Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds and barren flowers,
Desires and hopes and powers,
And everything but—sleep.

THE French were formerly considered the nervous race of the world. One spoke of the phlegmatic German, the stolid English, and the hysterical French. To-day the American has usurped the Frenchman's claim to this unenviable title, and not only do we hold the world's championship in this respect, but as a nation we are rapidly developing into a race of irritable, ill-mannered, nervous cranks. The various manifestations of these conditions are hourly, yes, minutely, exhibited by the hurrying throngs wherever Americans gather, and foreigners sojourning in our land soon lose their look of serenity, and their good manners in the necessity of keeping up with the American pace.

There is no question but that we are the pacemakers of the world, but our nerves, and, notably, our *looks* suffer horribly in consequence. This is especially true of the wage earners, upon whom the greater burden falls. Not so many years ago, one heard a good deal about "neurasthenia"; it was a term used, in season and out, for every functional nervous trouble in the calendar; as this word is now understood, there are few neurasthenics compared with

the masses who suffer from nerve tire—which seems to be a chronic state among us.

Evidences of nerve tire are seen all around us. Few awaken in the morning refreshed from the night's slumbers, bright, thoroughly alert, and eager for the joy of another day's toil; instead of this delightful response of the nervous system to a perfectly healthy impulse, the jaded nerves must be whipped into action. Hot food is required to start the internal machinery, and, after considerable effort, the lagging body is started on its weary way. In the majority of cases, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak, and these are they who, despite every warning, go on until the nervous system breaks down completely, and further effort of any kind becomes unbearable.

Nature never fails to send out indications when she is being abused, although the amount of abuse that she will tolerate is amazing. It makes us wonder what kind of beings we would be were our condition one of perfect health. Every man and every woman would be radiantly attractive, in one way or another. There is an indescribable fascination about a physically perfect being, one in whom all the functions of the body are performed with unconscious ease, leaving a surplus of radiant health to be felt, and in a

measure absorbed, by those lesser mortals fortunate enough to experience the charm of such a presence. Some one exclaims: "But this is the superman!" or the superwoman, as the case may be. Very true, such people are the rare exceptions; few of us have such health, and many of us were marred in the making. But no matter, given what material we have to work upon, every man and every woman could improve physically, and thereby in attractiveness, if a conscious effort were made to attain results.

What would you have—a nerve-racked body, weary in mind and soul, or a body dependent upon a healthy nervous system that does your bidding without fatigue? Choose!

Latterly, scientists have gone very thoroughly into the question of fatigue or nerve tire. One of its earliest signs is depression, notably that depression which is so apt to overcome those who have labored long, but unsuccessfully; it is very similar to the depression accompanying old age, when all the vital functions are at their lowest ebb, and life scarcely seems worth while. Indeed, there are many things in common between old age and a chronic state of nervous exhaustion—for instance, the blood becomes greatly impoverished, and a state of anemia follows; the glands—especially the

liver, which is the greatest scavenger of the body—act very sluggishly, and so a vast amount of debris is accumulated in the system; the skin does not function properly, and, therefore, the complexion becomes unsightly; the eyes lose what brightness and expressiveness they possessed, and grow dull and heavy, or

vacant and stupid looking; frequently, because the body is poorly nourished, it grows thin, even emaciated, the hair loses its luster, becomes brittle, breaks off, or falls out, may even turn gray; premature wrinkles appear, elasticity of gait is lost, and the carriage of the body is very faulty. This is not a pleasing future to contemplate, and these changes do not occur in a day or a week, nor in their entirety in every case, but some of them do appear in all those in a condition of nerve tire.

What is the remedy?

There exists a popular belief that muscular fa-

tigue does not affect the brain power, and vice versa. This is a mistake, a fact to be borne in mind when changing from one occupation to another. Change of occupation is undoubtedly restful, but it must not follow immediately upon work that has tired—there must be an interval of rest, during which the circulation is given time to equalize itself.

One reason why so many Americans,



Open air gardening strengthens the nervous system.

and notably men in the higher professions, suffer from hardened arteries, is because of the incessant overwork to which they subject their brain cells; a vast amount of blood is necessarily brought to an organ in constant activity, the blood vessels are dilated, their walls thicken to accommodate the extra blood pressure, and in time we have that now very common condition, with its accompanying unhappy signs—mental depression, anxiety, fear of this, that, and the other, irritability, and general grouchiness.

What is the remedy?

The general reply to this query has been, "Less work and more play." But latterly we are realizing that it is not the amount of work we do, but the manner in which we do it, and—especially—the *condition* in which we keep the machinery! Perhaps the best illustration of this truth will be found in the treatment accorded any piece of mechanism. Take an automobile, for instance. Given rough and hard usage, with only occasional attention to oiling, the life and looks of a car last, perhaps, a year; on the other hand, if a car is thoroughly cleansed after each day's use, the entire machinery carefully gone over as often as its make requires—some parts once in every hundred miles, others in every five hundred—if the fuel is the best, and administered in the cleanest form, it must follow that, in appearance, such a car is always pleasing and its power delightfully satisfactory.

So it is with the human body, an exquisitely modeled machine, warranted to wear under almost any conditions, but guaranteed to be a joy and a delight if treated with courtesy and consideration.

Of course, it might be said that the best way to overcome fatigue is to avoid it; but that is well-nigh impossible in our strenuous age. That we are an unnecessarily restless people and expend a vast amount of energy needlessly, cannot be denied; but the surest way to conserve our strength, with the given amount of work that must be done, is to regulate our lives; to live sanely; in



Spray aching, twitching feet with toilet vinegar.

other words, to take our work seriously, but not perform it with feverish haste; to go slowly, but surely; to remember the tortoise and the hare.

A frequent criticism made of us is that we luxuriate; new conditions bring forth new needs, and it is necessary to luxuriate in order to recuperate. The body that toils so incessantly must be well fed—not *overfed*—but supplied with good food properly prepared, and given plenty of time in which to consume it.

Another essential is a proper amount—to suit individual needs—of peaceful sleep in a well-ventilated room. Open-air sleeping is not only one of the best means by which to overcome insomnia, so frequently an accompaniment of nervous conditions, but is also a remedy for fatigue itself. A noted specialist occasionally sends an obstinate case into the wilds, as it were, to sleep and live under the stars. This is going back to first principles, and it is always curative, too. Little intervals of rest snatched between times—especially in the case of thousands of women, whose

lives are to-day more complicated than ever—is frequently productive of much good. This rest must, however, be complete, with no reading or other occupation while one is supposedly resting the body. On the contrary, the clothes should be loosened, the hair taken down, and the *mind* composed to absolute rest. Some cannot compose themselves to rest in the day; a capital way to overcome this difficulty is to bandage the eyes with a fold of absorbent cotton; this effectually excludes the light and rests the eyes as well.

Perhaps no form of home treatment is more efficacious in overcoming nerves than medicinal baths. Not only is the daily tubbing necessary to maintain that state of cleanliness of the skin without which there is no beauty or health, but it exercises a wonderfully beneficial effect upon the circulation and the nervous system. Medicated baths are advised in addition to the daily tubbing to restore nerve tone. The following is a good combination:

Tincture of camphor	2 ounces
Tincture of benzoin	1 ounce
Rectified spirits	4 ounces

Mix thoroughly, and pour sufficient into the bath to make the water milky and give it a faint odor. Lie in this bath for fifteen minutes, frequently sponging those parts that are not immersed. Wipe the body gently, throw on a loose garment, and lie on a couch for ten or fifteen minutes.

Another excellent bath, useful in those conditions of nerve trouble that manifest themselves in neuralgic forms, consists of:

Green soap	100 grams
Oil of turpentine	60 grams

Oil baths are also wonderfully restorative. Warm oil is gently rubbed into the body, including the face, over which flannel soaked in oil can be laid. The oil not only nourishes the skin and imparts to it a velvety smoothness, but rests and soothes the nerves that are extensively distributed over the surface of the body.

Aromatic vinegars have been found of much benefit in cases of nervous irritability—a good formula is made of:

Orange-flower water	2½ ounces
Glacial acetic acid	1¼ ounces
Lavender water	1 pint

The entire body may be sponged with water containing a sufficient amount of vinegar, or it may be sprayed with an atomizer; this is especially recommended for weariness of the feet. Odd as it may seem, if the feet are kept in good condition—in other words, if they are kept young—the entire body feels the beneficial effect; and, vice versa, if the feet are weary, and the nerves twitch with the excess of use to which they are subjected, the entire system is “out of gear.”

For those who can give the time, massage offers a sure means of overcoming nerve tire. In the hands of a competent masseuse, nothing is more soothing and more restful, as well as rejuvenating. Care must be taken in the selection of a masseuse; not only must she be skillful, but her personality must be in harmony with that of her patient. Unhappily, women are by nature antagonistic to each other; this seems to

(Concluded on page 182.)



Massage of the spinal nerves affords great relief.

ADMINISTRATION AND INSTRUCTION
BUILDINGS
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The Business of This Place is to Raise Salaries

That sounds queer, doesn't it? And yet there is such a place in reality—*The International Correspondence Schools*, of Scranton, Pa., an institution the entire business of which is to raise not merely salaries—but *your salary*.

To achieve that purpose the I. C. S. has a working capital of many millions of dollars, owns and occupies three large buildings, covering seven acres of floor space, and employs 3000 trained people, all of whom have one object in view—to make it easy for you and all poorly-paid men to earn more. Truly then—the *business of this place is to raise salaries*.

Every month an average of 400 I. C. S. students *voluntarily* report increased salaries. In 1912 over 5000 students so reported. These students live in every section. Right in their own homes, at their present work, the I. C. S. *goes to them*, trains them to advance in their chosen line, or to profitably change to a more congenial occupation.

The same opportunity now knocks at your door. What are you going to do with it? Are you going to lock the door in its face and lag along at the same old wages, or are you going to open the door and give the I. C. S. a chance to show you? Perhaps you don't see how, but the I. C. S. does. That is its business—to *raise your salary*. The I. C. S. has been raising salaries for over 21 years.

Here is all you have to do. From the list in the attached coupon select the position you prefer, and *mark and mail the coupon today*. It costs you nothing but the stamp to learn how the I. C. S. can raise *your salary*.

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Explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for the position before which I mark X.

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Mechanical Draftsman
Refrigeration Engineer
Civil Engineer
Surveyor
Mine Superintendent
Metal Mining
Locomotive Fireman & Eng.
Stationary Engineer
Textile Manufacturing
Gas Engines

Civil Service
Railway Mail Clerk
Bookkeeping
Stenography & Typewriting
Window Trimming
Show Card Writing
Lettering & Sign Painting
Advertising
Commercial Illustrating
Industrial Designing
Commercial Law
Automobile Running
Teacher
English Branches
Good English for Every One
Agriculture
Poultry Farming
Plumbing & Steam Fitting
Sheet Metal Worker
Navigation
Languages
Chemist
Spanish
French
German

Name _____
Present Occupation _____
Street and No. _____
City _____ State _____

be a primitive instinct which they have not yet entirely subdued. When, therefore, a masseuse is selected who is not thoroughly *en rapport* with her patient, more harm than good is done. Frequently a member of the family displays an unusual aptitude for administering this treatment; in which event, plain alcohol "rubs" are a good means of acquiring skill, and, at the same time, are of much benefit to the patient.

Massage of the spinal column, beginning at the base of the brain and grasping the tissues there deeply, gently, and firmly, sending strong strokes downward, stimulates the circulation, relaxes the tissues, and quiets the tired nerves. It also chases away the telltale lines that form here and there upon the face, and, if persisted in, so tones up the nervous system that a marvelous change for the better is soon effected.

We are in the habit of associating nervous breakdown only with those who are strenuously occupied, or who worry excessively. There is another class—those to whom life is one long *grind*! It is plain that these people have either mistaken their vocation or are troubled with mental strabismus. Life should be a joy, and work of some kind a pleasure. When life has lost its flavor, and our surroundings cease to stimulate, to enthuse, a radical change of some kind is imperative. Frequently a mere shifting of scenes corrects the trouble; in many cases of this kind it has been found that the development of a hobby has acted beneficially. The cultivation of something for which one has a talent or a taste may lead one far afield and open up many new channels of interest, and so completely change the current of one's life.

Open-air employment, especially gardening whenever feasible, is a well-established means of restoring a fagged-out nervous system. If one has not a garden, flower boxes on the roof are an admirable substitute.

Nerves do not require drugging—on the contrary, drugs should, above all

things, be avoided. A remedy that stimulates glandular activity, and that has a remarkably curative action upon functionally disturbed nerves, seems to meet the requirements of those conditions better than anything known for internal use. Further information upon this subject will gladly be furnished to any one in need of such a remedy.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

HAMPTON ROADS.—In most cases of patchy baldness, it is necessary to build up the system with nutritious diet, fresh air, exercise, and tonics, before any impression can be made upon the scalp itself. Sometimes very heroic local treatment is resorted to in an effort to stimulate the glands into activity. A suitable scalp tonic will be furnished to you on application.

MOTHER.—After exposure to extreme cold, do not go near a fire, but rub the parts either with snow, ice, or cold water until the circulation is restored. You will find this an excellent remedy for frost bite:

Compound tincture of benzoin 1 ounce
Phenol ¼ dram

Paint over the affected parts once or twice daily.

JOSHUA.—Itching of the skin is sometimes a nervous affection. Many people suffer from this condition in cold weather. The following mixture is highly recommended by a noted skin specialist:

Beechwood creosote 10 drops
Glycerin 3 ounces
Rose water 3 ounces

Mop frequently over the skin.

LISBETH.—For sensitive, delicate feet:

Dried mint 1 ounce
Dried sage 1 ounce
Dried angelica 3 ounces
Juniper berries ½ pound
Rosemary leaves 1 pound

Boil twenty minutes in five quarts of water. Use at moderate heat and immerse feet in bath for fifteen minutes several successive nights.

ELIZA JANE.—Treatment for enlarged pores will gladly be forwarded on receipt of a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

CANADIAN READERS.—I am holding at least twenty letters from Canadian readers, asking for private replies, but inclosing Canadian stamps. These letters cannot be answered unless their writers send self-addressed envelopes with United States stamps.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.



Why You Could Not Get Van Camp's

Last October, when folks asked for Van Camp's, thousands of grocers pointed to an empty shelf.

There were weeks before the new crop arrived when no beans could be had that were fit for Van Camp's.

We offered any price. For some we paid \$2.95 a bushel.

In one month we refused 17 carloads submitted, and shut our kitchens down.

That shut-down, we figure, cost us \$50,000.

Just for Your Protection

For 50 years all Van Camp patrons have enjoyed unusual beans.

White, plump beans of equal size, picked out by hand from the choicest crops.

They've often cost us three times what lesser beans would cost.

You expect such beans. And when we cannot get them for you we shut down.

So With Tomatoes

You expect in Van Camp's a zesty sauce. It has made these kitchens famous.

We must use to make it, whole, solid tomatoes, ripened on the vines.

The average cost is five times the cost of common sauce.

But the million homes which buy Van Camp's always get that sauce.

Van Camp's
BAKED
WITH TOMATO
SAUCE
PORK AND BEANS

"The National Dish"

You also get beans baked in steam-heated ovens. They come to you nut-like, mealy and whole.

You get the tomato sauce baked with the beans, so the flavor goes clear through.

Under our process the beans come to you with all their oven freshness.

Did you ever get beans half so good as these without the name Van Camp?

Three sizes: 10, 15 and 20 cents per can

Baked by Van Camp Packing Co. (Established 1861) Indianapolis, Ind.

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Rate, 50c. a line, or \$2.61¼ a line, which includes AINSLEE'S and POPULAR Magazines, making a total of 4,000,000 readers—the cheapest and best Classified Advertising medium on the market. Next issue of SMITH'S closes March 5th.

Agents & Help Wanted

AGENTS—Handkerchiefs, Dress Goods. Carlton made \$8.00 one afternoon; Mrs. Bosworth \$25.00 in two days. Free Samples. Credit. Stamp brings particulars. Freeport Mfg. Company, 45 Main St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

AGENTS—Either sex, sell our guaranteed hosiery. Whole or part time, 70 per cent profit. Goods replace free if hole appears. Experience unnecessary. Quaker Knit, 26 So. 31st Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

AGENTS. Portraits 35c. Frames 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days' credit. Samples & Catalog Free. Consolidated Portrait, Dept. 1146, 1027 W. Adams St., Chicago.

AGENTS earn from \$3.00 to \$9.00 a day selling Scientifically Tempered Knives and Razors with photo handles. We show you how to make money. Write today for special outfit offer. Canton Cutlery Co. Dept. 230, Canton, O.

\$1000.00 earned by three people in 30 days selling our Fire Extinguishers. 500% profit. Protected territory. United Mfg. Co., 1039 Jefferson, Toledo, O.

AGENTS MAKE BIG MONEY and become sales managers for our goods. Fast office sellers. Fine profits. Particulars and sample free. One Dip Pen Company, Dept. 9, Baltimore, Md.

YOUNG MAN would you accept and wear a fine tailor-made suit just for showing it to your friends? Or a Slip-on Raincoat Free? Could you use \$5 a day for a little spare time? Perhaps we can offer you a steady job if you live in a town smaller than 10,000, write at once and get beautiful samples, styles and this wonderful offer. Banner Tailoring Company, Dept. 30, Chicago.

BIG MONEY WRITING SONGS.—We pay hundreds of dollars a year to successful writers. Experience unnecessary. Song poems wanted with or without music—will pay one-half of profits if successful. Send us your work today. Acceptance Guaranteed if Available. Largest concern in the country. Free particulars. Dugdale Co., Dept. 256, Washington, D. C.

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GOVERNMENT positions pay big money. Get prepared for "exams" by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Free booklet. Patterson Civil Service School, Box Y, Rochester, N. Y.

SOAP AGENTS MAKE MORE MONEY SELLING THE Celebrated Lirio line. Coffee, flavorings, spices, soaps, perfumes, and 135 other items. Big commissions to you—Exclusive territory—Freight allowed. Handsome premiums to your customers. Free Sample Case. No deposit required. Free catalog. Lirio Company, 14 Lirio Building, St. Louis, Mo.

AGENTS WANTED; best paying agency proposition in U. S.; assures you \$1500 yearly; inexperienced taught how to make \$75 to \$200 monthly; let us show you. Novelty Cutlery Co., 15 Bar St., Canton, O.

Hosiery manufacturer wants agents to sell established guaranteed line direct to consumer. Big commission. Exclusive territory. Credit. P. Parker Mills, 720 Chestnut St., Phila., Pa.

MEN and Women wanted for Government Parcels Post Positions. \$90.00 month. Write for vacancy list. Franklin Institute, Dept. L7, Rochester, N. Y.

I MADE \$50,000 in five years with a small mail order business. Began with \$5. Send for free booklet. Tells how. Heacock, 5290 Lockport, N. Y.

Motorcycles

MOTORCYCLE Manual—Construction and operation of a motorcycle fully described and illustrated; complete trouble chart; 125 pages; cloth bound 50 cents postpaid; paper covers 25 cents. Motorcycle Manual, 51 Chambers Street, New York City.

Personal

HOROSCOPE—HAVE YOUR HOROSCOPE for the new year (1913) cast by the famous English astrologer, Madame Maude. For free trial reading send 10c and birthdate to Madame Maude, Dept. L, 1233 E. 50th St., Chicago.

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PATENTS THAT PROTECT AND PAY. Advice and books free. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Send sketch or model for free search. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

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PATENTS THAT PAY BEST. Facts about Prizes, Rewards, Inventions Wanted, etc. Send 10c's postage for valuable books. R. S. & A. B. Lacey, Dept. 62, Washington, D. C. Established 1869.

PATENTS, TRADE-MARKS AND Copyrights. Our hand book on patents will be sent free on request. All patents secured through us are described without cost to the patentee in the Scientific American. Mun & Co., Patent Attorneys, 373 Broadway, New York. Branch Office, 625 F Street, Washington, D. C.

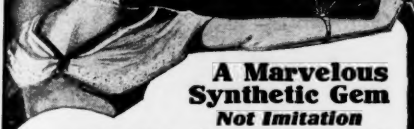
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Corn Chicanery

Trying to Cheat One's Feet



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Thousands of others use liquids and plasters, just for brief effect.

Yet every corn can be removed in two days. Every corn pain can be instantly ended.

Anyone can do this in a scientific way. It is being done on a million corns a month.

The entire corn comes out, root, callous, everything. And without any pain or soreness. You simply apply a Blue-jay plaster and then forget the corn.

You are cheating yourself when you use makeshifts in these modern days. The use of Blue-jay ends the corn.

- A In the picture is the soft B & B wax. It loosens the corn.
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(304)

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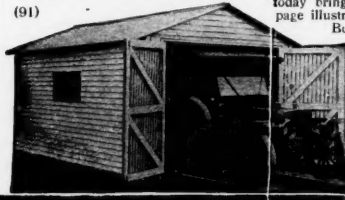
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An artistic, fireproof steel structure for private use. Gives absolute protection from sneak thieves, joy riders, fire, lightning, accidents, carelessness, etc. Saves \$20 to \$30 monthly in garage rent. Saves time, work, worry and trouble. Comes ready to set up. All parts cut and fitted. Simple, complete directions furnished. Absolutely rust-proof. Joints and seams permanently tight. Practically indestructible. Locks securely. Ample room for largest car and all equipment. Made by one of the largest makers of portable fireproof buildings. Prompt, safe delivery and satisfaction guaranteed. Postal sent today brings new 56-page illustrated Garage Book by return mail.

(91)



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When that request is made of you it ought to bring forth a bit of heart you are not merely not ashamed of, but one that carries the distinction of your personality. The great improvement of the century

PEERLESS PATENT BOOK FORM CARDS

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alone can properly and effectively represent the big man—the man of power; the man who does things; the man the big places are looking for. These cards carried in book form, in exquisite seal leather case, are detached one by one as they are used. All edges are perfectly smooth. Every card is clean, flat and unmarred. Send for a sample book today and detach them one by one. Prove their value to your own senses. Send today.

The JOHN B. WIGGINS COMPANY, Sole Manufacturers
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Don't Wear a Truss

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Tiresome, Torturous Trusses Can Be Thrown

Away FOREVER. And It's All Because

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the painful truss, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to prevent slipping and to afford an arrangement to hold the parts securely in place. NO STRAPS, BUCKLES OR SPRINGS—cannot slip, so cannot chafe or compress against the public bone. Thousands have treated themselves in the privacy of the home and conquered the most obstinate cases—no delay from work. Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive. When weakened muscles recover there is no further use for truss.

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Built like Government Torpedo Boats, of tough, puncture-proof, galvanized steel plates, so securely joined together that a leak is impossible. The Mullin's Steel Boats are guaranteed against puncture, leaking, waterlogging, warping, drying out, opening seams, etc. MOTORS: The Low-Victor 4-Cycle and Ferro-Cycle. Light, powerful, simple, can be operated by the beginner, start like automobile motors, one man control, never stall at any speed, exhaust silently under water. Beautiful illustrated book, free. THE W. H. MULLINS CO., World's Largest Boat Builders, 325 Franklin St., Salem, Ohio

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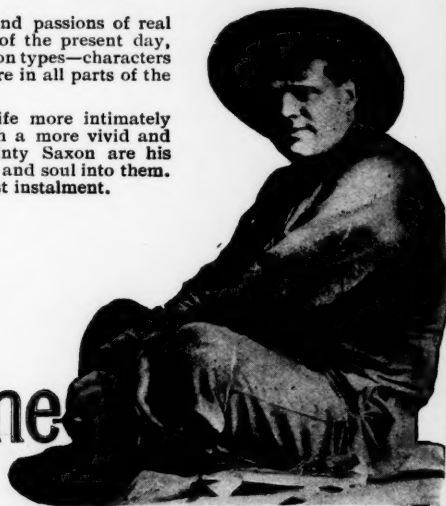
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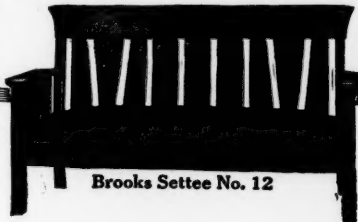
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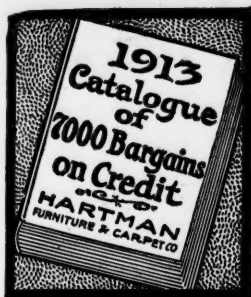
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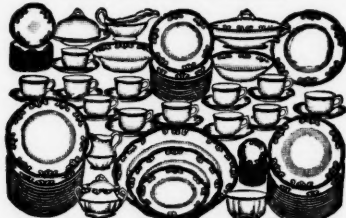
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